



BLUE AND GRAY

WEEKLY



Stories of Brave Northern and Southern Boys in the Civil War.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1904 by Frank Tousey, 24 Union Square, New York.

No. 1.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 12, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

OFF TO THE WAR; OR, THE BOYS IN BLUE MUSTERED IN. *By LIEUT HARRY LEE.*



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OFF TO THE WAR;

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A Story of the Great Civil War.

By LIEUT. HARRY LEE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CALL TO ARMS.

On the fifteenth of April, 1861, there reached Fairdale, a smart little town in the central part of New York State, news of the famous call of President Lincoln for 75,000 volunteers. It was to Fairdale, as well as to many another Northern town, a stunning shock and hard to realize.

It was true that there had been much bluster and heated argument between the Northern and Southern leaders in Congress. Fort Sumter had been bombarded and people both north and south of Mason and Dixon's line were awakening to the realization that the possibility of a civil war was not remote.

Yet the mass of the people had not until now really believed but that the controversy would be settled without a recourse to arms. The call of the President for volunteers, however, with other startling reports, fanned the war spirit into a conflagration which was to result in the sad meeting of brothers on the battlefield and four years of the fiercest fighting ever recorded in the history of the world.

It is not the purpose of this story to decide which was

right or which was wrong. It may be that each side had its grievances; certainly each side had its rights.

The argument and the bitterness have long since expired. With dispassionate eyes men of to-day look back with sadness upon that unfortunate national quarrel. Brave men performed brave deeds in both armies. Valor and high principle actuated the participants on both sides. The memory of Jackson and Lee is revered as deeply in the North as that of Grant and Sherman is respected in the South to-day.

With this assumption we will present to the reader a story of daring deeds by the brave wearers of both the blue and the gray. It is believed that the absence of a partisan spirit will not detract from its interest, or offend the prejudice of any participant alive to-day.

The great battles, the movements of the armies, scout duty, cavalry raids and guerilla warfare will form the ground work of our narrative. The exciting adventures of our youthful characters will be simply incident thereto.

Fairdale boasted of a small but quite select college, where young men of good families received their education. Through the enterprise of Jack Clark, one of Fairdale's popular youths, the boys had banded themselves into a militia company known as the Fairdale Blues.

It had figured more as a social vehicle than aught else

thus far in the affairs of the town, though the company was well drilled and equipped efficiently by the State, which annually sent an inspector to the town.

Jack, as son of Homer Clark, the wealthy magnate of Fairdale, was one of the most popular young men in the town. His sister, Bessie, was also noted as being the virtual belle of the place. She was as sweet and pretty as any young woman could wish to be, and much liked by everybody.

Of course, she had many youthful admirers, and chief among these was Hal Martin, the young lieutenant of the Blues. It might also be said that Bessie liked Hal very much, for he was a handsome, frank youth, whose parents were of the best people of the town.

There was great excitement in Fairdale on that eventful fifteenth of April. Schools were closed, many business places suspended for the day and people gathered in knots on the street excitedly discussing the President's call.

Jack Clark was just coming through the turnstile at the college grounds when a voice called:

"Hello, Jack, old friend! I want to see you."

A tall, slender yet well-built youth, with a fine face and a courteous manner, which proclaimed him of aristocratic birth, had paused at the stile.

"Will Prentiss!" exclaimed Jack, and an odd light came into his eyes. "I am glad to see you, Billie. What's up?"

Prentiss gripped Jack's hand with a hard pressure. Then his eyes moistened and a light of actual distress for a moment shone in them.

"Isn't it awful, Jack? You have seen President Lincoln's call to arms?"

"Yes, I have."

"It means—only think what it means, Jack!"

"War!"

"Yes," and young Prentiss' voice dropped. "And more than that to us. You know that I belong in the South. You and I have been warm school friends. This day I had a letter from my father, who has taken a colonelcy in the Confederate Army. I am called home—and Jack, you and I are friends no longer."

For one full minute the two college chums stood looking at each other. One was the son of a Richmond (Virginia) magnate. Will Prentiss belonged to the aristocracy of the South.

The other was the son of a Northern man of wealth. Up to this moment there had never been aught but friendship and love between them. At this moment they were—technically at least—foes.

"You are going to join the Confederate Army?" asked Jack.

"Yes! I am going home to-day!"

Neither could say more. Each was too full of emotion. They looked at each other again, and Jack held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Will!"

"Good-bye, Jack!"

They turned their backs upon each other. When they met again it was under far different circumstances, as we shall see.

Jack was on his way to the armory of the Blues. When he reached there he found that nearly all the members of the company were present.

A great deal of excited conversation was going on. Jack at once organized a meeting, and the question of the hour was discussed. The details of the meeting we will pass over, but suffice it to say that the boy militiamen voted unanimously to offer their services to the Governor of the State.

A telegram was sent that hour, and in due time an answer came, signed personally by the Governor.

"TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE FAIRDALE BLUES:

"Your offer is accepted by the Governor, with his heartiest appreciation. Your stipulation that the company shall retain its present officers throughout its term of service will be respected. Hold yourself in readiness, for you may be sent to Washington within forty-eight hours."

The sensation created in Fairdale was most intense. The news spread like wildfire that the Fairdale Boys in Blue had volunteered, and might start for the front at any moment.

Of course, every boy in the militia company was under age, but not a parent interposed an objection. Not one member of the youthful company but was eager to go.

At once Captain Clark ordered them out for drill, and on the town common they went through their exercises enthusiastically and amid the cheers of the people. That evening a grand rally was held and another company of older men was formed.

Jack went home that evening to find his mother with tear-wet eyes and his father with pale, grave face. It was some time before the subject could be opened by any of the family.

Then Mrs. Clark, with a brave woman's spirit, kissed Jack on the forehead, and said:

"My prayers will go with you, my boy! I believe God will shield you, but—be always brave and true to your duty, even though it may be at the cost of your life."

"Never turn your back to the foe, lad!" said Homer Clark, sternly. "Be a soldier and a man; don't forget that you are a Clark!"

Jack's voice had a manly ring in it as he replied:

"I will promise to do my best!"

Just then Bessie rushed into the room. She was all excitement.

"Oh, Jack," she cried, "the Boys in Blue are going to the war. Hal has just told me, and you are captain. Oh, I want to go, too!"

Jack gasped, and Mr. and Mrs. Clark looked aghast.

"Why, Bessie!" exclaimed Mrs. Clark. "What do you mean?"

"That is just what I mean!" cried Bessie. "I want to go, too."

"Bess!" said Mr. Clark, sternly. "This is no time for jesting. Do not forget your dignity."

Jack laughed, and, taking his sister in his arms, kissed her.

"I don't believe you realize what war means, Bess," he said. "The discomforts of camp life would hardly suit you. As for donning a uniform, well, the young ladies of to-day don't emulate Moll Pitcher."

"I don't want a soldier's uniform," said Bessie, earnestly. "The uniform of a nurse would suit me very well. I think that a brave woman can find enough to do at the front, and it is the duty of those who can, to go!"

Mr. Clark's face cleared, and Mrs. Clark turned with a glad smile. Jack laughed again.

"Well spoken, little sister," he cried. "That is surely a worthy ambition. Perhaps you may yet realize your desire."

"We will consider the matter," said Homer Clark, gently. "It is certainly very noble of you, Bessie. There is no holier calling."

Days passed and the suspense became great while the country was in the throes of this great internal dissension. In the meantime events had shaped themselves. Troops had reached Washington, the Baltimore riot had thrilled the people, and then, one evening, Hal Martin came rushing into the Clark mansion.

"Jack! Where are you? Here is a telegram from the Governor. We are ordered to New York by the first train, and thence to Washington, to be mustered in. We're off to the war at last!"

CHAPTER II.

AN IMPORTANT MISSION.

The scene of our story will now change to the National Capital—Washington. For days past troops had been pouring into the city.

Down its broad streets marched regiment after regiment. All was excitement of a sort hard to describe.

With all the other companies marched the Fairdale Blues. They were boys of eighteen and nineteen, but all were well developed and of the kind that make good soldiers.

As the Boys in Blue swung into line for the march down Pennsylvania Avenue they attracted instant attention. Their handsome uniforms, their manly bearing and their marching brought a round of applause from the people.

President Lincoln from his reviewing stand smiled and bowed to them as they passed. The officers saluted and the privates swung their caps and cheered.

Beside President Lincoln, with others, stood Congressman Allen, who was a warm friend of Jack's father and who knew the Boys in Blue well.

"What handsome company of boys is that?" asked the

President, with interest. "They march like West Point lads!"

"Those are the Fairdale Blues," replied Congressman Allen. "The young captain is a son of Homer Clark, the most prominent man of the town. He is a young man of promise."

"I like his looks," said the President, thoughtfully. Then he suddenly turned and said to an orderly:

"Hayden, order that young company from Fairdale to bivouac as near the White House as possible. At seven o'clock I want to see that young captain. Have him brought to me."

The orderly saluted and departed. Allen had listened with surprise to this command, but he did not venture a query as to its meaning.

An explanation soon came, however. President Lincoln lowered his voice, and said:

"Allen, you can guess why I have sent for that young captain. I like his face. He would die in the keeping of a trust. One of our spies, Dupee, will be at the ford this side of Fairfax with valuable papers for me. Some one must go out there to-night and get them. In these hours of trial I do not know whom to trust, but I believe that lad is brave and honest.

"What, you will take him away from his company?" asked the Congressman in surprise.

"If he returns safely he shall rejoin his company or I will attach him to my personal staff."

"From what I know of the boy he would rather remain with his company."

"Very good! It shall be as he wishes," said President Lincoln, as he passed from the balcony.

Jack was indeed surprised when the orderly came with the President's command that they bivouac near the White House. There chanced to be vacant land nearby, where they pitched their tents.

But if Jack was surprised at this, he was even more astonished to learn that by the President's orders he was to report at the White House at seven o'clock.

What could this mean?

"I'll tell you," said Hal Martin, with conviction. "He saw us this afternoon as we marched down the avenue, and it is an even thing that he has got some special work for us to do. Perhaps to guard some part of the city outskirts."

"We're here for duty," cried Jack. "We shall obey his commands."

The bivouac was made and the Boys in Blue began to taste their first experience of real soldier life. So far it had been little more than a holiday.

They were in high spirits, and merry jest and laughter went around as they sipped their hot coffee and ate their hardtack and gave no thought to the morrow.

They did not dream of the thrilling experiences before them. They had little idea of the real meaning of a battle or of its terrible results. But such was near at hand.

Tom Peters, a stout-built and jolly youth, was one of the corporals of the company. Joe Ward, a sergeant, was

the opposite of the genial Peters so far as rotundity of person and effervescence of spirits went.

When, a little before seven, Jack took his leave to go to the White House, he left the company in Hal's charge. Guards had been placed and no man was allowed to leave the camp.

Jack, attired in his handsome uniform and carrying his dress sword, walked boldly up to the White House entrance.

He was admitted and soon was met by a dapper little man, with glasses. He was one of the President's secretaries. He scrutinized Jack's card.

"Ah, yes," he said, quickly, "President Lincoln gave orders that you were to be admitted to his presence at once."

The little secretary retired. Presently he reappeared and beckoned to Jack. As the young captain followed he saw that the White House was patrolled by armed men, who were there to protect the life of the President.

For secret assassins and spies were lurking everywhere. There was such a division of sentiment in Washington that as the President had said truly to Congressman Allen, it was almost impossible to tell whom to trust.

It was, therefore, not hard to understand why President Lincoln had selected Jack Clark as his midnight messenger. He was sure to be a loyal servitor.

In a few seconds Jack had passed into an inner room and was in the presence of the President.

For a moment the young captain felt a trifle abashed. He stood half at a loss what to say.

The large, homely features of the great President expanded into a smile. He looked at Jack in a cordial way and said:

"Captain Jack Clark of the Fairdale Blues, I believe?"

Jack stammered a reply and President Lincoln indicated a chair.

"Sit down, Captain. No doubt you wonder why I have sent for you. Well, I saw you at the head of your company to-day. Candidly, I liked your appearance and I selected you as the most likely one I know of to perform a secret as well as dangerous mission for me to-night."

Jack's veins tingled with surprise and pleasure. Here was honor at the very start, and a great chance to distinguish himself. He at once replied:

"I am at your service."

"First, let us have a little understanding, my boy. Congressman Joe Allen pointed you out to me. Do you know him?"

Jack's face lit up.

"He is one of my father's friends."

"Exactly. He spoke very highly of you."

"That was very kind of him."

"Well, he must have had good reason for it. Now, my boy, it is greatly to be regretted that this war has come upon our country. It is sad that we should fight among ourselves. But this Government must be maintained. The enemy employs spies, and I have had to resort to the same

methods. The Confederates are in great force at Fairfax Court House and beyond.

"Our General McDowell, with over thirty thousand men, is now in waiting to move out and give them battle. We only await information as to the enemy's exact position and their formation. This I expect to have to-night from one Dupee, who has been for days in the enemy's lines.

"He will be at the fordway of the little brook, just this side of Fairfax Court House and just outside the enemy's lines at nine o'clock to-night. It is now seven. It is a gallop of twelve miles, which a hard rider might do in an hour and a half, but two hours will land you at the fordway. Even if you are late he will wait.

"Then, after you get the papers from him, you are to ride back to Washington, not sparing your horse. Come straight here and deliver the papers to me. I will give you the pass for the bridge and the guard at Alexandria. Immediately upon your return, or at least as early in the morning as possible, General McDowell and General Tyler will march to give battle to the Confederates. Now, do you understand what is required of you?"

"I do, sir," replied Jack, who was thrilled greatly. "I thank you for the confidence you place in me, and I will do all in my power to faithfully carry out your commands."

"I believe you, my boy, but before you go I must warn you of the great dangers you will meet. Beyond Alexandria the country is overrun with the enemy's cavalry and scouts. If you fall into their hands you will lose your life."

"I shall use all possible caution."

"I believe you are discreet, as well as brave. You are better pleased to remain with your company than to seek advancement by becoming attached to my staff, or that of one of my Generals, are you?"

"I cannot leave the boys very well, sir, just now," stammered Jack.

"Very well, sir," said the President, with a smile. "I will send word to General McDowell to have your company mustered in to-night. We shall need you to-morrow in the advance upon Manassas. You will not be long detained from your company, unless you fall into the hands of the enemy, which I trust will not happen."

The President seized a pen.

"One moment," he said, abruptly. "Here are your passes beyond the lines. Here is an order for the best horse in the White House stables. Return to me, my boy, safe and sound. My earnest prayers go with you."

Jack, with every vein tingling, left the presence of the President and hurried excitedly out of the White House. An orderly followed him and said:

"You are to follow me, sir, by the President's orders."

A few moments later Jack was at the White House stables. A fine thoroughbred horse was placed at his disposal. He mounted and the orderly rode beside him to the Long Bridge, where he crossed the Potomac and took the road to Alexandria.

The orderly here took his leave, and Jack was now left

to his own resources. He had received full directions, however, as to the roads and knew which to take.

Just before reaching Alexandria, though, Jack took a road leading to the west and to Fairfax Court House. Here he passed the last guard and was outside the Union lines. Behind him was his company and his friends and safety. Before him was an unknown region of darkness and pitfalls and danger.

It was all a new experience to Jack. It could be said that for one brief instant a strange, indefinable dread came upon him.

But only for a moment. Then the soldierly part of his nature asserted itself, and, drawing his uniform cape across his chin, he settled down in the saddle and spurred his horse on into the darkness.

For a couple of miles he rode on thus. He could see and hear nothing that might cause suspicion. He passed a plantation house and a few negro cabins.

He had begun to mentally congratulate himself upon his good fortune when, as the road descended suddenly into bottom land, he saw a bright light by the roadside. The dark silhouette figures of a number of men were revealed.

Jack pulled up his horse. He knew that the fire was that of an outpost or isolated guard, and he realized that his path was most effectually blocked.

CHAPTER III.

IN DEADLY DANGER.

Jack was not reckless. He knew that to betray himself to the Confederate outpost meant capture. To attempt a bold dash through them would be almost certain death.

He could not guess how many men were in the group about the fire. There might be a dozen, or perhaps a hundred were bivouacked near. In any event it was necessary for him to halt.

He did so, and sat some moments upon his horse meditating upon what was the best course to pursue.

He could hear plainly the talk and coarse laughter of the men and the rattle of horses' bridles. He guessed at once that this was not one of a line of pickets but the camp of an outpost cavalry guard.

He knew that the Confederate cavalry was of a superlative order. The Southern horses were thoroughbreds and their riders dashing and bold. If his presence was discovered he would be almost certainly ridden down and captured.

But, on the other hand, he must go on to Fairfax Court House. Dupee, the spy, was no doubt waiting for him there. He must get the papers and return to Washington.

Instinctively he considered the feasibility of going around the Confederate camp. But on one side was a

creek and a swamp to cross. On the other, impenetrable woods, where he would be almost sure to go astray.

Jack began to grow nervous. Every moment was valuable.

He had almost decided to leave his horse and make a detour on foot through the woods, when a startling sound came to his ears.

It was the thud of horses' feet behind him. Down the turnpike a rider was coming at a good rate of speed.

For a moment Jack was in a quandary. Then he dropped from the saddle.

He led his horse into the gloom by the roadside and waited. A moment later a horse and rider flashed by him.

Then a shot rang out upon the air, followed by a hoarse cry, and Jack saw in the glimmer of the outpost fire that the road was full of armed men.

The horse and rider had been halted.

Every word of the confab which followed came to Jack's ears. He listened, with a thrill of interest.

"Hey! Is that Devoe?"

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"A friend! Confound you for fools! Don't you know me?"

"How can you expect us to recognize anybody in this blackness? Who are you?"

"I am Hardy. I have been on the watch in Washington. I have papers for General Beauregard. It has been learned that the President has just sent a rider out here to meet a spy named Dupee, who has papers for him giving the details of our formation and information which the enemy must not get. I have followed the fellow all the way, but a mile back lost track of him. Have you passed such a fellow?"

"Not to-night. He has not come by this road."

An invective escaped the lips of the horseman. He wheeled his horse about, but two of the Confederate outpost men seized his horse's bridle.

"What's this, you fools? Let go my horse's bit! I'll cut you down!"

"No, you won't, my friend," said the cavalry captain, leveling a pistol at him. "It is a fine story you tell, but we've got to know more about you. We are compelled to hold you until our Colonel and his command relieve us in the morning."

The rider was furious.

"You'll do nothing of the kind. Are you Lieutenant Devoe, of the Virginia Horse?"

"No. Devoe has charge of the next outpost, two miles north."

"Well, you have no right to detain me. I am Hardy, the Confederate spy. I am just from Washington and my story is straight. That emissary of the President's and the Yankee spy he expects to meet must be captured. You detain me at your peril."

"If you are all you claim, you must have credentials. Let us see them."

"I dare not carry credentials for fear of having them found upon me while inside the Yankee lines."

"Then we shall have to hold you until daybreak and we are relieved."

In vain the assumed spy raved and threatened. The outpost captain would not relent. He was, as he believed, doing his full duty.

It is needless to say that Jack Clark listened to all this with the liveliest of interest and anxiety.

He saw how close had been his escape.

He also understood how thoroughly honeycombed with treachery the Government at Washington was. How the Confederate spy had learned of his secret mission was a mystery.

The orderly who had accompanied Jack might have been a traitor. In any event the President's purpose had leaked out.

The realization stirred the boy captain to his greatest depth. He was impelled with the thrilling desire to carry out his enterprise in spite of all obstacles.

It looked as if Hardy, the Confederate spy, was for the present in statu quo. It was Jack's opportunity.

He must in some way get by the outpost. But how could it be done?

It would be the height of madness for him to attempt a daring dash.

Jack Clark was a youth of resource. He was not long in making up his mind what to do.

He knew that beyond doubt the other side of the bottom-lands was for some distance patrolled by pickets. To steal past them was his game.

But if he left his horse and went forward on foot, even if he succeeded in passing the picket guard, he would be unable to get to the ford at Fairfax on time. But he recalled one remark of the President, and this was that Dupee would wait.

"He must wait," he muttered. "I may not get back with the papers at midnight, as expected by the President, but I will get back as soon as I can. That is the best I can do."

Jack unloosed the girth and slipped the saddle from his horse's back. He tied the bridle rein tight and then led the animal out into the highway.

With a stinging lash he sent the high-spirited horse flying down the pike toward the outpost. Then he leaped the rail fence and darted into the woods.

Jack heard the commotion created by the sudden appearance of the riderless horse. He heard pistol shots and yells, and then felt a thrill of delight as he heard the receding hoof-beats of the horse disappearing far down the pike and knew that the animal had swept past the guard.

There was much excitement and some of the cavalry guard mounted their horses and gave chase.

But the riderless horse was of a fleeter breed and left them far behind. Meanwhile Jack was creeping up the ascent beyond the bottom-land and was keeping a sharp lookout for the picket.

He was saved by the merest chance. This was the voice

of the picket, who, at the moment, was not fifty feet from Jack and unseen by him.

"What's happened, Bill?" the fellow called to the picket beyond.

"I don't know," was the reply. "I think some of ther hosses stampeded. Got any terbacker, Jim?"

"Yes, all yer want. Come out to ther end of ther beat an' I'll pass yer a plug."

"Thank ye!"

The picket's back was turned to Jack and the boy captain silently passed him and for a moment crouched behind a tree. When the fellow walked a few yards away to meet the other guard Jack slipped quickly away into the gloom.

He had got through the line very adroitly, but this was only the beginning of his troubles. It was now necessary to find the highway again.

It was easy enough to lose one's way in the deep tangle of the oak scrub.

But Jack was aided by the noise of the men at the outpost. He crept on in a cautious way until suddenly he emerged and felt the gravel of the highway under his feet.

He drew a deep breath of relief.

He knew that the rest of the highway to Fairfax was undoubtedly clear. To be sure, there was danger always of meeting a patrol or a band of scouts, but he was on his guard.

He listened intently and made sure that the cavalymen had returned from the pursuit of the riderless horse.

Then he set out down the turnpike as fast as he could. On he ran, lightly and silently, in the cool evening air.

Far off across the country he saw the glow of campfires and knew that it was a part of the Confederate lines. As he rapidly cut down the miles with his tireless stride these became plainer to view.

Of one thing he was satisfied.

The enemy were in line nearer the capital than the President dreamed of. There was no doubt that Fairfax Court House was in the hands of the Southern soldiers.

Jack kept an eye out, half hoping to find his horse grazing by the roadside, but no such good fortune was accorded him.

He knew that it was now far beyond the time appointed for him to meet Dupee at the ford.

He grew nervous and strained every effort to make the distance in quick time. Suddenly he turned an angle in the road and came to a halt.

He was just in time.

Back from the highway was a brick house, with a pretentious yard in front. Before it there had been a painted paling, but this was now pulled down and heaped in a burning pile about which were congregated a score of men.

Horses were tethered to saplings, and Jack saw at once that it was the bivouac of a scouting party. The glare of the fire lit up the roadway.

There were lights in the house and at the open door a woman was seen pouring coffee for the cavalymen, while negro slaves were passing the cups around.

The coffee smelled good and Jack would have given much for a sip of it, but he discreetly kept in the shadows.

He knew that he had little to fear in passing this point for no picket guard had been established. But a daring thought came to him as he saw the horses tethered in the edge of the oak growth. It would have been an easy matter to creep in and slip the halter of one and lead it away.

But Jack knew that he was but a little distance from the place where he was to meet Dupee, the Union spy.

He watched the scene but a few moments. Then he crept over the rail fence and keeping beyond the line of fire-light skirted it and went on down the highway. He ran rapidly on.

The road now began to descend. Far overhead he saw the lights of houses. He knew that it must be Fairfax Court House.

Jack felt a sudden thrill when he paused to see the trickling water of a rivulet at his feet. A little beyond was the shallow water of the fordway.

There was the appointed spot. He knew he must be nearly two hours behind time.

He paused a moment, listening.

All was silence save for the murmur of the flowing water. Jack remembered the signal—a faint tremolo whistle.

He gave it and waited. His heart almost stood still as it occurred to him that Dupee might have given him up and gone away.

But suddenly a faint rustling sound came to his ears. He turned. A tall, muffled figure had appeared out of the gloom.

A whisper came to his ears:

"Who are ye?"

"The President's messenger," replied Jack. "Who are you?"

"I am Dupee."

"I am sorry to be so late, but——"

"That is nothing. I expected that," replied the spy, gruffly. "Here are the maps and plans. Secure them well. It's the best I could do. Beauregard is ready, thanks to the legion of Confederate spies in Washington."

"Yes; one followed me—Hardy is his name, but——"

"Hardy? I know him. He is a cunning rogue. Well, friend, there is no time to lose. Be off, and I'll do the same."

Dupee, the spy, glided away into the darkness. Jack was left alone by the waters of the fordway, with the precious papers folded under his vest.

It was now in order to get back to Washington before daybreak. He had just turned to leave when a startling thing happened.

Lights flashed on all sides, dark figures plunged into the waters of the fordway and a hoarse voice yelled:

"Catch the Yankee spy! He ran this way! After him, you laggards!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SAFE RETURN.

In that moment Jack Clark believed that all was lost. He had not the least doubt that he was seen, and that he was the object of the remarks he heard.

But in this he was mistaken.

It was Dupee who had been tracked to the fordway and who was now leading the Confederates a hot chase up the run.

The pursuers passed so close to Jack that he could almost have touched them. It was a thrilling moment.

He had drawn his pistol, for he would have defended the papers with his life.

But as good fortune had it, he had no need to use it. In another moment he was left alone by the ford.

It is hardly necessary to say that he did not linger there. With all possible haste he made his way back along the turnpike.

It was not long before he came again in sight of the bivouac by the plantation house. The cavalymen were grouped about the fire.

Jack again made his way around the fire-light and reached the highway beyond safely.

It was easy enough to understand why the party had not posted guards. They were really inside their own lines and, therefore, felt safe.

Jack paused just beyond. A daring plan had occurred to him.

This was to secure one of the Confederates' horses. It looked feasible enough, for he could not see that they were guarded.

Jack crept cautiously into the little grove of saplings where they were tethered.

He had just reached the bridle of one when he was given a mighty start.

"Hey! What are ye doin' thar, nigger! Git out right smart, or I'll put a ball through yer."

Jack waited not on the order of going. He gave a backward leap and went down the highway in the gloom like a flash.

He expected to hear the whole cavalcade coming after him. A shot was fired after him, but that was all.

He owed his escape solely to the fact that he had been mistaken for a negro.

Jack, however, ran on as fast as he could for miles, only pausing now and then to get his breath.

He knew that he must be drawing near to the outpost

where the Confederate spy, Hardy, had been held up by his own men.

As he went on Jack tried to decide upon some logical plan for again breaking through the picket line. Suddenly he came to a startled stop and dodging into a thicket by the roadside fell upon his face.

A sound came to his hearing which had caused him to do this.

It was the measured thud of a horse's hoofs. The animal was walking, and at times stopped.

At first Jack had felt sure that one of the cavalrymen was patrolling the highway on horseback.

He would lie still and wait for him to pass.

But he felt a thrill when the horse's hoofs seemed to be coming slowly down into the thicket beside him. Then a startling truth burst upon him.

There was a faint whicker from the animal's nostrils and the sound of the horse's teeth as it browsed upon the undergrowth. Jack raised his head and saw the animal's form outlined against the sky.

It was riderless!

In an instant he was upon his feet and had the animal by the bridle. It was his own horse.

In that moment the boy militia captain felt that Fate was kind to him. The animal was unharmed.

Jack led him out into the roadway.

He was without a saddle, for Jack had removed this to frustrate identification in case of capture when he sent him racing through the picket line.

In an instant the Union boy captain was on the horse's back.

He started away on a gallop toward Washington. Ah, if he was only on the other side of the outpost now!

But he must get through in some way. As he rode on he tried to hit upon some plan.

The impulse was strong upon him to make a bold dash throughout the line. But he dismissed this as suicidal.

He now knew from certain objects by the wayside that he was drawing near the outpost.

He drew rein and proceeded more slowly. Soon he saw the glare of the campfire.

Then he saw the figures of the cavalrymen as before. He pulled up now in the shadow of a clump of trees.

He had half decided to dismount when a startling thing happened. A sheet of flame leaped from the roadside just ahead and the notes of a wild hurrah went up, blended with the cracking of firearms.

Mounted men burst from the woods all about him. Jack's horse bolted and when he got him in hand he was facing several mounted men, one of whom had his horse by the bridle and the others were holding pistols at his head.

There was a fierce conflict raging at the outpost. Jack gave all up as lost at that moment.

"Surrender, you Confederate dog!" a ringing voice sounded in his ears. "You are a prisoner! Disarm him, men!"

In a flash the glorious truth burst upon the boy captain. He gave a yell of very joy. He knew his captors were Union men.

"It's all right, boys!" he cried. "I am a Union man. I am Captain Clark of the Fairdale Blues, and I must get to Washington at once."

"Eh?" exclaimed the sergeant who had given the order to disarm him. "That is a pretty story. What are you doing here?"

"I have been on a secret mission for the President. I carry important papers. Don't delay me a moment."

Of course, the Union sergeant was disposed to be incredulous. But a light was produced and when Jack's uniform was seen and he showed the plans received from Dupee the Union cavalrymen were surprised.

In the meantime the Confederate outpost had been routed and the picket line driven back.

The troop of U. S. cavalry had come upon the outpost by a mere chance and driving in the pickets had ridden completely around it and thus forced the Confederate body of cavalrymen to surrender.

It was only one of those thousands of swift dashes through the lines made during the course of the war by the daring raiders of both sides. In this case it had been opportune, indeed, for Captain Jack Clark of the Fairdale Blues.

As soon as the captain of the cavalry squad had heard Jack's story he detailed a couple of troopers to act as escort to Alexandria.

It was now necessary for them to fall back, as reinforcements were coming and they might be overwhelmed. So Jack was accompanied by the squad for several miles.

Then they cut away across the country to strike another blow, while Jack and his escort rode to Alexandria.

It was after two o'clock when Jack Clark rode up to the White House entrance.

He was nigh exhausted, but he slipped from the horse's back. He was met by the very orderly who had accompanied him to Alexandria some hours before.

"You are late," said the orderly, "but the President expected that."

"I must see him at once."

"Come with me. He is waiting."

A few moments more and Jack Clark, bedraggled and pallid, stood again in the presence of President Lincoln.

The great man looked anxious and haggard, but he smiled and said:

"Well, my boy, Providence has brought you safely back; I hope you found Dupee."

"Here are the papers, sir."

With an eager cry President Lincoln took them from Jack's hand. He glanced them over quickly. Then, arising, he placed both great hands on Jack's shoulders.

"My brave boy," he said, earnestly, "you have done the Nation a great service this night. In one hour these plans will be in the hands of our commanding generals. Before daybreak every division of the Army of the Potomac will be on its way to Manassas. To-morrow a great

battle will be fought, if the enemy stand their ground. Your company I have assigned to General Tyler's command. You will be in the vanguard and one of the first companies in the field. I hope to hear good accounts of you. The foe believe that they are in the right. We believe that our cause is just. It must remain with God which of us prevails. But I shall remember you, my boy, and the service you have done to-night."

Jack left the White House feeling all the satisfaction and delight of one who has performed a dangerous duty and performed it well.

He found his way to the bivouac of his company. The boys welcomed him eagerly and listened to his story with great interest.

Hal Martin embraced the boy captain and cried:

"To-morrow we go into battle. Some of us may not be here to-morrow night, but we will do our duty."

The other members of the company swung their caps and cheered.

Tom Peters, the genial corporal, turned a handspring and cried:

"You bet I'll be here, boys, if I can dodge the Confederate bullets."

"Well, if you stay, I'll stay, too, for spite," cried Sergeant Joe Ward. "I'm not going to leave you full opportunity to raid the commissary stores."

Everybody laughed, for both Tom and Joe were noted for their fondness of good things to eat. They were the jolly spirits of the company.

It is hardly necessary to say that there was little sleep for anybody in the company that night.

Anxiety and eager interest in the morrow's prospects banished sleep. But daylight was not far away.

It had hardly come when word came to march at once for Long Bridge. There they fell in with the general division and the long march began.

Wednesday morning, the seventeenth of July, in the year 1861, the Boys in Blue marched out of Washington City to take part in the first great battle of the war.

The battle of Bull Run is recorded as one of the greatest in history. None was ever more fiercely and desperately fought.

The Boys in Blue presented a fine appearance as they marched out over the great Virginian highway on that beautiful summer day.

So, in fact, did the entire army of over 32,000 men, with their blue uniforms, their flashing bayonets and their rattling drum corps.

Many a brave fellow was destined never to return from that march!

Foemen worthy of their steel were to be met. The most sanguinary of conflicts was before them.

But the spirits of all were high. At noon they rested, not far from Fairfax Court House. As the day was broiling hot it was decided that the army should not go on to Centerville until the next day. At Fairfax the enemy's skirmish line was encountered and driven back.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT ADVANCE.

The next morning at five o'clock the whole Army of the Potomac was in motion. With great caution it pushed on five miles to Centerville, and here a halt was called.

Scouts had brought in reports that the enemy was in force at Bull Run, some miles further on.

They were well intrenched, and prepared for desperate resistance. General McDowell very wisely decided to wait until his advance could be more fully organized.

But that morning, the eighteenth, General Tyler sent an orderly down the lines to select a brigade to push on and draw the enemy's fire, so as to locate their batteries.

In this brigade was numbered the Fairdale Blues.

When the news arrived that they were going into a skirmish the boys were all overjoyed. Quickly they fell into line, with Jack Clark and Hal Martin at their head.

They advanced rapidly as far as Blackburn's Ford.

Here, for the first time, the Boys in Blue were under fire. At first some of them felt nervous and were inclined to dodge when the bullets went whistling shrilly over their heads.

But this soon wore off, and the brave little company loaded and fired at command, and held their line with credit.

History speaks of this preliminary engagement as really a hot affair. The infantry for a time exchanged deadly fusillades with the Confederates.

Then they retired and batteries were sent forward to engage in a deadly duel with the foe.

At night the reconnaissance was discontinued and the brigade fell back to Centerville.

The Boys in Blue lost two men, and they were buried that evening upon the battlefield, with appropriate honors.

Jack Clark received a slight flesh wound in the arm.

Corporal Tom Peters had the visor of his cap shot away, but took the disaster so good-humoredly that all laughed heartily. There were many slight wounds and narrow escapes. Altogether, the Boys in Blue had acquitted themselves with great credit.

The loss of two of their number cast a cloud of sadness over the company, but it was an incident expected by all as one of the features of war.

That night Jack and Hal reclined upon their blankets in their tent and talked until a late hour.

They were thus engaged when a footstep sounded outside and a gruff voice said:

"Captain Clark!"

"Yes, sir," cried Jack, springing up and emerging from the tent. An orderly stood before him and saluted.

"You are Captain Clark of Company F, or the so-called Fairdale Blues?"

"I am, sir."

"General Tyler would like you to report to his headquarters at once."

Jack was much surprised, but he said:

"I will report at once, sir."

The orderly strode away.

"Well," exclaimed Hal, "what's up now?"

"I can't imagine," said Jack, as he buckled on his sword.

"I'll bet it's another expedition of trust. I say, Jack, by rights you should turn it over to me this time."

"I'll see, old chum. If I can do so, I certainly will."

Jack hurried away to General Tyler's headquarters, which were in a house of one of the citizens of the town.

He was led into a large, square room by the orderly.

A long table extended through the center of the room. At this sat a number of the Union Generals.

Jack recognized General Heintzelman and General McDowell, as well as General Tyler. There were a dozen subordinate officers.

On the table were spread maps and plans. Some of them were what Jack had received from the hands of Dupee, the spy.

Standing at one end of the table was a man of remarkable appearance. Jack stared at him a moment in mystification. Somewhere before, he felt sure, he had seen that face.

The man was dressed in the garb of a Southern planter. His features were regular and handsome. He wore a tuft of beard upon his chin. He was apparently just past the middle age.

The orderly announced Jack's name:

"Captain Clark of Company F."

Jack stood silently, while the eyes of all in the room were upon him. General McDowell smiled and nodded, and said:

"This is the same young officer, Tyler. The Commander-in-Chief has utmost confidence in him. He is true blue!"

General Tyler arose and addressed Jack:

"Your name is Jack Clark?"

"It is, sir."

"You are the officer sent by President Lincoln to meet Dupee, the spy, that night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good! Did you ever see this gentleman at the foot of the table before?"

Jack looked at the Virginia planter, who returned his gaze steadily. He replied:

"Not to my knowledge, sir."

"He is a Southerner, but loyal to the United States. He has brought us news of the foe. He says that we have overrated the Confederate strength. He advises us to send one of our divisions to-night, under cover of darkness, into Bull Run and capture several thousand Confederates there congregated. We are much taken with the proposition, but we dare not trust a stranger. Now, we propose first to send a scout into the Run to locate the foe and discover the possibility of an ambush."

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"That is all right, sir," he declared. "I am ready to serve."

"We have chosen you on account of the good record you made that night and because we believe you discreet and loyal."

"I will not abuse your trust," said Jack, with a bow. "I will do my best."

General Heintzelman had been studying Jack's face intently.

"I like his looks, McDowell," he said. "I think he will do."

"So do I," declared McDowell. And a general murmur of approval went up.

"Now, Captain Clark," said General Tyler, "we shall detain our informant here, Mr. Spotsdale, until your return. If we find from your report that he has told us the truth we shall at once send two regiments down into the Run and surprise the foe. If, however, we find that he has given us false information, and that a trap has been planned, we shall deal with him as we do with spies and traitors."

Every eye was upon the Southerner, who had given his name as Spotsdale.

He flushed and his eyes snapped in half-anger.

"I object to being detained on such conditions," he cried.

"Why should you object, if your motives are genuine?" asked General Heintzelman.

"For the reason that this young man may not bring back to you a correct report. I am here in good faith——"

"Pardon me," interposed General Tyler, coldly, "we know that Captain Clark is a reliable man. You may feel safe in his hands, if you are honest."

"I resent this imputation against my honesty."

"In war it is necessary to doubt every person who comes to our camp. You are no exception. I will say that if we find you have told us the truth you shall have our confidence henceforth and a suitable reward."

"Then you hold me as a prisoner?"

"Not exactly. You have the liberty of our camp, accompanied by a guard."

"This is fine treatment to accord one who seeks to serve you as a friend. Why not let me accompany Captain Clark? I will very quickly prove to him that what I tell you is true."

"No," said General Tyler, sternly. "All is arranged. Orderly, have a guard assigned to Mr. Spotsdale. Now, Captain Clark, we shall ask you to make your investigations and report at your earliest moment. I will give you the countersign."

General Tyler leaned forward and whispered in Jack's ear:

"On to Richmond!"

Jack bowed and hesitated a moment.

"I will ask a favor," he said.

"Well."

"I will ask that a companion be allowed me on this expedition."

The faces of the Generals showed surprise. General Tyler asked:

"Is that your desire? Have you anyone in mind?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"My lieutenant, Hal Martin, of the Blues."

"I see no reason why we should not grant that request, gentlemen," said General Tyler, looking at the other officers.

"None at all," agreed General McDowell, and the others bowed.

As Jack was about to pass from the house he caught the gaze of Spotsdale fixed almost appealingly upon him. There was a hunted light in the planter's eyes. In an instant Jack read what he believed to be the truth—that the man was a spy and that he had been sent to arrange a trap for the Union soldiers.

With this conviction, however, Jack hurried away.

He went at once to his own tent.

Hal Martin was there, waiting eagerly for him. As Jack appeared, he exclaimed:

"Remember your promise, Jack. I am to have a chance."

"All right, Hall. I have fixed it. Get a couple of carbines, one for you and one for me."

Jack raised his voice and called:

"Corporal Peters!"

The genial corporal came tumbling out of his blanket. He saluted and asked:

"What is it, Captain?"

"Sergeant Ward!"

Joe also came tumbling out. Both sergeant and corporal stood before the boy captain.

"Boys," said Jack, impressively, "we are called out on a midnight mission of General Tyler's. While we are absent you are acting captain, Tom Peters, and you, Joe Ward, are acting lieutenant. If we never return you are to see that our successors are named by a two-thirds vote of the company. Do you understand?"

Both sergeant and corporal saluted.

"Your orders shall be obeyed, Captain," replied Tom. "But hang me, I wish I was going with you!"

"So do I," put in Joe.

"Well, that is not possible. Do your duty here, and that is all that will be necessary. Now, don't forget."

A few moments later Jack and Hal, having discarded their swords for carbines, were passing the guard.

They kept on for half a mile and finally passed the last line of pickets. The night was dark, and far away could be seen glimmering lights, which marked the enemy's lines.

The two young scouts had studied carefully the maps of the region.

A few miles above their present location was the entrance to the chasm of Bull Run, spoken of by Spotsdale, and where, he claimed, a detached company of the Confederates might be easily cut off and captured by a night surprise.

It was their duty to ascertain if this report was true, or if it was a decoy and death-trap planned by the Confederates.

CHAPTER VI.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY.

There were three roads leading to Bull Run, as Jack and Hal knew.

One led to Blackburn's Ford and was the direct road to Manassas Junction. Another led to the great Warrenton Turnpike, and crossed the Run at the Stone Bridge. The third road led southward to Union Mills. It was about three miles down this road to the locality spoken of by Spotsdale as the proper place to cut off the Confederate detachment.

Jack and Hal pressed on down this road. Three miles is not a great walk for active youths.

But before they had covered two miles they began to proceed with greater caution. The campfires of Confederate outposts could be seen.

It is idle to assume that their mission was not fraught with great risk. Once a body of Confederate horse passed them at full gallop.

Again, they were met by several of the Confederate scouts, who pursued them some ways in the gloom.

But the boy scouts gave them the slip and finally reached a point from which they could see the picket line of the foe.

This settled all doubt in their minds.

They saw the earthworks of a long redoubt, and muzzles of the guns in the light of campfires.

It was easy to discover that masked batteries crowned the slope on either side of the road.

For the Union troops to have made a night attack here would have resulted in an ambush and heavy loss.

This point seemed to be one of the strongest in the Confederate line. Indeed, it was the right wing of the army.

"Hal," said Jack, with conviction, after they had prowled around awhile in the dark, "that fellow is a spy and gave false information."

"I believe you."

"We might as well go back with that report."

"It will be tough on Mr. Spotsdale."

"Yes."

"He will be executed at sunrise; that is the fate of a spy."

"I am sorry; it is, however, a part of the game of war. Our duty says to make the report, just the same."

"That is right."

The boy scouts now started back along the road. Just back from the highway they saw a plantation house.

It was of the kind common to the South—low and rambling, with double piazzas.

"Hal," said Jack, "I suppose the people who live there hate the sight of a blue uniform, but I am parched and hungry. Let us call and see if we cannot at least get a drink of water."

"Is it safe?" asked Hal.

"Why not?"

"Well, you know we are in the enemy's country; they might bring a guard of Confederate soldiers down upon us."

"We won't give them time; they are between the lines and I don't believe they would dare refuse soldiers of either army. I am going to try it."

"All right!"

Jack and Hal boldly passed up the flower-bordered walk to the front door. They crossed the piazza and rapped.

Light streamed through the fan window over the door; voices were heard faintly.

The door opened and a decrepit old colored man stood on the threshold.

"Ah, gemmens!" he said, with a bow. "Wha' yo' want heah?"

"We are hungry and thirsty," replied Jack, boldly. "We are soldiers of the Union Army, and we ask you if you could at least give us water to drink?"

The colored man peered at them.

"You is Union sogers? Ah don' know, sah! I will ax Marse Will——"

"Wait a moment; is your master at home?"

"He am, sah!"

"What is his name?"

"It am Prentiss, sah! Dis am de plantation ob Cunnel Prentiss!"

Jack gave a start.

"Prentiss!" he exclaimed. "That was the name of my college chum. Do you suppose it can be——"

At that moment a rich, full voice came from the room beyond:

"Who is that at the door, Nellie? Why doesn't Cato ask them in?"

There was a rustle of silken skirts, and the next moment a young girl stood in the hall before the two boys in blue.

Hal pulled off his cap, but Jack stood spellbound. The young woman looked at him with equal surprise.

In all his life Jack had never seen so beautiful a young woman. At least it seemed so to him.

Hal was the first to speak.

"Pardon us, madam," he said politely. "We mean no discourtesy, but we crave a little of your Southern hospitality."

The young girl's manner instantly changed. She dropped a curtsy.

"Cato, show the gentlemen in. You are welcome to Prentiss Hall, though you are, as I see by your uniform, enemies to my people."

Jack and Hal bowed low.

"Never enemies to your sex," said Jack, gallantly, "be-

it North or South. The questions of the day may be settled elsewhere just now. Let us assume there is no difference, as of old."

A light of reciprocal sentiment shone in the young girl's eyes. She had noted that the young Union officers were handsome and gently born. This may have had its influence.

"It shall be as you say," she said. "If you will step into the dining-hall I will see that you are served with both food and drink. My father would censure me if I should turn anyone from the door."

This was true Southern hospitality, as the boys recognized. Generous even to sworn foes—the inherent trait could not be wiped out by any feud.

Again the rich voice came from the inner room:

"I say, Nell, who is it?"

"That is my brother," she said, apologetically, to Jack and Hal. Then, raising her voice:

"Two Union officers have done us the honor to visit us."

"The deuce! Are we included in their lines so soon?"

A tall, handsome youth appeared in the doorway. He was in the uniform of a lieutenant of the Confederate Army.

There had been a ring of alarm in his voice.

But this disappeared instantly. The next moment he crossed the hall with a bound.

"Jack Clark and Hal Martin, my old school mates!"

"Billie Prentiss!"

The three youths embraced effusively. In that moment there was no trace of sectional prejudice or feeling. They were friends and school mates.

"Well, I'm glad to see you down in old Virginia, boys! It seems good! Now, you shall see——"

Then young Prentiss stopped as a sudden flood of recollections came over him. Something like a spasm of pain crossed his face.

"Hang the war!" he cried.

"That's right!" chorused Hal and Jack. "We'll hang the war up for awhile. By the way—ahem! Oblige us, Billie!"

"Oh, pardon me!" cried Prentiss, with a comic gesture. "How could I be so rude? My sister Nellie; this is Jack Clark and Hal Martin of Fairdale College. Hi, you Cato! Stir your stumps and tell Aunt Melinda to spread the table and put on her best cuts of that wild turkey; her best persimmon jelly, and don't forget a little 'possum, too! Also bring up some of father's best wine. Be off, you black shadow! Ha! ha! ha! Well, this is joyful!"

Into the drawing-room the two young officers went.

For the next half hour the time passed in a jollification they long remembered.

Miss Nellie played her guitar and sang to them. There was jolly conversation, and it seemed no lapse of time before Cato announced that the meal was ready.

And such a meal!

The two young Union officers dreamed of it many days afterward. The taste lingered long on their tongues.

Not until the last wine course was reached did a recollection of their mission come to either.

Jack sprung up.

"Oh, I forgot!"

"Eh!" exclaimed Prentiss; "forgot what?"

The two Union officers looked at each other aghast.

"That's one on us," said Hal. "We must not linger another moment."

"The deuce!" cried Will Prentiss. "Are you crazy? What calls you away so soon?"

"We are on a very important mission for General Tyler," said Jack. "Duty demands that we return at once."

A comprehensive light came into the eyes of both Will and Nellie Prentiss. They arose with sudden stiffness.

"Oh, yes," said Will. "Of course, you are Union officers. Just think of it, Nell! What would our father say if he saw us now?"

"He could only say that we have done just right," declared Nellie, "though he hates the sight of a blue uniform."

"I hope we will not encounter your father, then," said Hal.

There was a light of sadness in Will Prentiss' eyes. He held out his hand.

"Gentlemen, in this house there is no difference of sectional feeling. We may meet in battle bye and bye as deadly foes, but we are friends here."

"I hope the day will soon come when we can be forever friends," said Jack. "So you are in the Confederate service, Will?"

"Yes; I am lieutenant in the Virginia Grays. My father is Colonel of my regiment. It is quartered not two miles from here."

"So am I in my country's service," said Nellie, proudly. "In a few days I shall don the uniform of a nurse."

"I congratulate you," said Jack. "If I should be wounded I would ask no greater joy than to be your patient."

"But if you were, you would be my prisoner," she said, archly.

"Well, I don't know that I could object even to that," said Jack, gallantly.

"Pshaw! Don't say such soft things to Nell; you'll turn her head. Only think what chances you chaps took in coming here. I might make prisoners of war of you."

"Hardly, without our consent."

"Rest easy! I have not yet received my commission, so am not actually in service. But your mission down here must be an important one?"

"I fear it will cost one poor fellow his life," said Jack.

"Ah, is it so serious?"

"Yes; I must ask if you know him. He claims to be a planter hereabouts and gives the name of Spotsdale."

"Spotsdale! My soul!" gasped Will Prentiss, as he recoiled back, with ghastly white face, while Nellie Prentiss became pale as death.

CHAPTER VII.

BACK TO HEADQUARTERS.

It must be said Jack and Hal were astonished beyond measure. They stared at Will Prentiss and his sister.

Both were strangely affected. Nellie sank into a chair and wrung her hands.

Will took a turn up and down the room before he could answer the question of Jack Clark:

"What is the matter?"

"I—you see—I do know this man Spotsdale. He is a very dear friend. You say he will—lose his life?"

Will spoke hesitatingly and hoarsely. He was much agitated.

"I fear he will be shot to-morrow morning as a spy."

"Shot! A spy! Oh, no, no! What has he done to deserve that?"

"Well," said Jack, quietly, "I will tell you that his life rests in our hands. Upon our word depends his fate."

With this he told of his mission as given him by General Tyler, and of the fact that Spotsdale was held a prisoner subject to their report.

Will and Nell listened with much agitation.

"Yes, yes!" said Will, "he did really intend to decoy your regiment into a trap. But it was not to destroy them; it was to force them to surrender."

"Ah!" said Jack, in surprise, "then you know all about it?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Don't you think it a treacherous game?"

"Why, I can't say that I do. It is one of the strategical tricks of war. Not a man would have been shot, if they had surrendered, as they doubtless would."

"I see nothing out of the ordinary strategical work, Jack," said Hal. "Spotsdale was only doing what any of us would do."

"That may be," said Jack, "but it won't save his life."

"No; he will be shot!"

"No! no!" cried Will Prentiss, excitedly. "It must not be! It cannot be! Jack, you are my college chum; we are old friends; you must promise me to save this man's life. It is an easy matter. I——"

"Wait!" said Jack, sternly. "Would you have me swerve from my duty?"

"Duty? Why, no—that is—you need not do that. It is easy for you to tell such a story that he will be absolved and yet your troops will not be sent into the trap."

"Will," said Jack, firmly and yet with a ring of sadness in his voice, "it hurts me to refuse you, but Spotsdale is an enemy to the Union. I must do my duty and report against him—yes—even though it be at the cost of our friendship!"

Nellie Prentiss had arisen. Her eyes were flashing and her pale face rigidly set.

"He is right, Will! I respect him for his stern prin-

ciple. He can do nothing else. Our father—cannot be saved!" Her voice broke and her lips quivered.

Jack started as if stung.

"Your father!" he gasped. "Is Spotsdale your father?"

"Yes," replied Will, burying his face in his hands.

"Now you can know, Jack, why we feel so bad."

Jack and Hal stood silently, with bowed heads, for a moment. It was the hardest position in which either had ever been placed.

Nellie was sobbing, and Will Prentiss was bowed with grief. Jack picked up his cap and cape and took up his carbine. Hal did the same.

Without a word of farewell, with soft tread and bowed heads, they passed out into the night.

Not until they reached the highway and the cool night air fanned their faces did either make speech.

Then Hal exclaimed:

"By Jingo! I felt bad, Jack! I don't think war is right!"

"If everybody could think as we do, there would be no war, Hal."

"What are we going to do, Jack? We can't see their father shot dead! It is not human!"

"Nor can we forsake our duty!"

"Oh, see here, Jack! There is such a thing as being too straight-laced. Humanity is one thing and principle is another."

Jack gave a groan.

"I can't help it!"

"And you are going to do it?"

"I've got to!"

"No, you haven't."

"See here, Hal! I am an officer of the U. S. service. I am entrusted with a very important mission. It is my duty to carry it out, even though it costs the life of my dearest friend. It is a stern necessity. I must tell General Tyler all. Then I will plead for this man's life."

"Pshaw! You'll never get it. Those Generals will never show mercy to a spy!"

"Perhaps not. But—I can do nothing more."

They tramped on now over the dark highway. Suddenly a sound ahead caused both to start.

A horse's flying hoofs were heard coming down the pike. The next instant a rider came madly down through the gloom.

The two boys let him go by. They could see no reason for stopping him. Little could be seen of him, but he went flying down the road toward Union Mills.

"I wonder what's up?" mused Jack. "Keep your eyes open, Hal. There may be something else coming."

But nothing followed. The boys kept on until the lights of the Union camp could be seen.

They were suddenly halted by a Union picket.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Friends!" replied Jack.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign."

Jack advanced a step and said in a low tone:

"On to Richmond!"

"Pass in," said the guard, lowering his musket. The two boys were a moment later in the Union camp. They went at once to the headquarters of General Tyler.

It had been many hours since they had left there upon their mission. They had accomplished it successfully and returned.

It was now only necessary to make a report verbatim to the General.

As Jack entered the room in which the consultation of Generals had been held his resolution weakened.

The horror of consigning a man, the father of his dearest friend, to an ignominious death, appalled him.

Even his sense of duty weakened. It required all his fortitude to face General Tyler.

"Hello! Here is our young captain of the Blues," cried Tyler, as he caught sight of Jack. "Well, boy, what have you to report?"

"We visited the locality described by the man Spotsdale, sir, and we find that it is heavily entrenched and the enemy are there in great force."

"Ah! Then it was, to your best belief, a trap?"

"It was, sir."

"You have done well, Captain Clark. You deserve great commendation, though the surprising action of Spotsdale led us to assume all this some hours ago."

"What!" exclaimed Jack, in a mystified way. "Do you mean——"

"I mean that the rascal has cheated military justice this time. He made a daring escape——"

"Escape? Oh, hear that, Hal! Thank God, he has escaped!"

General Tyler stiffened and looked at Jack in an astonished way.

"Repeat that," he said. "I am a little deaf. You are glad he escaped?"

Jack paused in embarrassment.

"I said that, sir, but I think I ought to explain to you first why I said it."

With this, Jack gave the full story of their experiences at the Prentiss mansion. The General listened with deepest interest.

When Jack had finished, he said:

"Captain Clark, you shall have especial mention for all this in my report. You have proved yourself a brave officer and a discreet man. I respect the feeling you had toward your friend. It was hard for you to betray his father, but you did right, my lad! You did right!"

Jack was in a happy frame of mind, and so was Hal, when they left General Tyler's headquarters a little later. They went back at once to their tents.

Most of the Fairdale company were asleep. Tom Peters, however, greeted them with great delight and cried:

"I'm glad to resign, for I never wanted to be captain, anyway. The next job of this kind you have, Captain, I wish you'd take me."

"I promise you that I will, Tom," cried Jack. "Now,

turn in, both of you. I shall do the same; we have yet a couple of hours before sunrise."

This was done and Jack and Hal slept soundly.

With the beating of the reveille, though, they were quickly up. The day was to hold many incidents for them.

Hal had been doing some thinking over the incidents of the previous night, and when he met Jack in the morning, he said:

"I say, Captain, do you remember that flying horseman we met some time after leaving the Prentiss house?"

"Yes," replied Jack.

"I'll wager he was no other than Spotsdale, or rather Colonel Prentiss. I am told he knocked his guard over, got on to an officer's horse and galloped past the sentry before anyone knew what had happened."

"Beyond a doubt it was him."

"I'll never forget that 'possum and persimmon jelly, eh, Jack? By Jupiter! If I didn't know of a prettier girl in the North—you know who—I believe I'd fall heels over ears in love with Miss Prentiss, though she is a little Confederate lady. Eh, Jack?"

Jack flushed crimson.

"That's not a very polite way to speak of our hostess, Hal."

Hal took a step nearer and stuck his thumb in Jack's ribs, with a chuckle.

"Do you think I'm a fool, Jack Clark? I have eyes, and I tell you that young woman is all right, and she likes you all over. Come on now and admit it, old chum. Don't you think she is just a peach, eh?"

Jack pushed Hal aside playfully.

"Don't give me such a jolly as that, Hal Martin. You forget that she is a Confederate, and we are enemies."

"Pshaw! That will soon be changed. We're going right out and whip the Confeds. right out of their boots, and in a few days it will be all over and we'll be better friends than ever. This war is a kind of a family quarrel, anyway. It won't last long."

But Hal was a poor prophet, as after-events proved. Not for four long years was the cruel strife to end, and not until millions had been spent and thousands of lives had been sacrificed. Which shows what a hard matter it is to subdue the American spirit, either North or South.

Breakfast was hardly over when an adjutant came galloping down and hailed young Captain Clark.

"Report to General Tyler for orders, sir, at once!"

Jack hastened away to headquarters. There he met General Tyler.

"Clark," said the commanding officer, "we shall not be able to give battle to the enemy before Sunday. In the meantime, we must strengthen our skirmish line in the vicinity of Blackburn's Ford.

"I have sent cavalry around both wings of the enemy's forces to harass their outposts. I want you to march out a couple of miles beyond here and deploy a strong skirmish line and work your way up as near as you can to the batteries. If you see a good chance to cut off a detachment

or make a good strike, take it. I will send two signalmen with you, and if you think you need the support of a battery I will send it to you. We don't want to make the action general, but just to keep the enemy busy. Do you see?"

"I understand, sir," replied Jack.

"You will, of course, be only one company of many I send on this same mission. But the position I assign you will be the most dangerous and call for the exercise of much judgment. I am placing complete confidence in you."

"I thank you, General Tyler," said Jack, with spirit. "I will try and deserve it."

Jack hurried back with all haste and the drum called the Boys in Blue to arms.

They fell into line instantly. A brief inspection was made, then, with little Teddy Scott, the drummer boy, beating time, the gallant little company marched along the line with quick step.

Their fine appearance drew the attention of the other companies and they were cheered as they went to the front.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PLUCKY CHARGE.

Both Jack and Hal knew the danger of the task before them. There is no more perilous calling than that of the skirmisher.

The thin, straggling line sent out to feel the way for the army is sure to be cut down and picked off, sometimes absolutely. In this way whole companies have been wiped out.

But the skirmish line is essential, and the sacrifice of life unavoidable.

The Boys in Blue soon had covered the march of two miles and skillfully deployed over the ground they were to cover.

It was a wild region of scrub growth and rolling country. There were innumerable hillocks and ravines where the Confederate sharpshooters found safe cover.

But a few yards at a time the Boys in Blue were able to advance.

They fired as often as discretion and judgment dictated. Lying flat on the ground behind the cover of whatever bush or stump they could find they crept on.

Their fire was answered hotly, but so persistent was their advance that the Confederate line began to fall back.

"We are driving them, boys!" cried Hal, with exultation. "Keep up the good work!"

One after another of the little hillocks was occupied by the line of blue. They must now be in close proximity to the enemy's batteries.

In fact, just as Jack had sent the word along for a

halt, until further reconnaissance could be made, a deafening roar shook earth and air, and a solid shot tore up the earth of the ridge.

The battery was a small one, the guns being only six-pounders, and occupied a little ridge just ahead, not more than two hundred yards.

There were two of the guns, and their muzzles looked out through a network of saplings which made a small redoubt.

The battery now began to send shot and shell into the line of the skirmishers, but not being able to depress their guns enough, little damage was done.

The line of Confederate infantry had now fallen back on a line with the battery.

Tom Peters crept along the ground to Jack's side and said:

"I say, Captain, I wish we had a twelve-pounder here. We could smash that battery to flinders. I don't think it has any great support. I have been around to the right, and I can't locate anything but a thin line of infantry behind it. I believe a quick charge would capture it."

Jack's veins tingled.

What a feat it would be to charge the battery and capture it! He remembered the instructions given him by General Tyler.

Jack knew that prudence was the most commendable trait in a military commander. He was cool and critical. It was not his purpose to do anything rash.

But he at once began to study the situation very closely. He knew that if anything was done, it must be done quickly.

For the battery would no doubt be soon reinforced. Then an attack would not be advisable.

He gave quick orders for the line to draw in closer. Then the word was passed along that a charge was intended.

A spirit of enthusiasm seized the boys. When the order came a wild cheer went up.

Jack and Hal led the charge with drawn swords. The defenders of the battery at once sent a volley of grape shot into the ranks of the Blues.

Men staggered and fell. The line swayed, but did not falter. There were but a few yards more to cover and then they were on the redoubt.

The Confederates fought like fiends. They were shot down at the guns, which were now abandoned, and a fierce hand-to-hand conflict followed.

Six times the line of the Boys in Blue was swept back, only to return. Neither Hal nor Jack could remember much of what followed in detail.

They only knew that they were in the thick of a fierce fight, and that men were falling all around them.

Jack narrowly escaped death a score of times. One of the gunners fired at him, and the bullet struck his sword hilt. A second bullet took off his cap. Another gave him a cut in the scalp and still another grazed his knee.

But he seemed to bear a charmed life. Hal was the same.

Plucky Corporal Peters was in the thickest of it. His humorous remarks and undaunted courage kept many of the boys in line.

The contest did not last long, but it was fierce while it did last. A ringing cheer went up from the throats of the Boys in Blue when the gray line was swept back over the ridge and the battery was won.

It was a daring charge, and only the most desperate of bravery had made it a success.

The Boys in Blue held the ridge.

But it could be seen that they would not be able to do so long. Jack now regretted that he had accepted General Tyler's advice and sent for a battery.

It was now rather late to do that. Long lines of gray were seen rushing through the wood a half mile away to reinforce their comrades.

The single company of Blues could not hope to compete with such superior numbers.

"Hurrah!" shouted Tom Peters. "We've whipped 'em! The guns are ours!"

"That's so," agreed Jack, "but I'm afraid we can't hold our position."

"Why?"

"A legion of reinforcements are coming out yonder. Do you see them?"

Jack handed Peters his glass. The corporal shrugged his shoulders.

"Turn their own guns on them," he cried. "Send for reinforcements. Let's hold 'em off, Captain."

But Jack did not think this wise. In this he showed real generalship.

The guns were of no use at present, for they had been spiked. Ten of the little company of Blues lay dead on the field. There were as many more wounded.

This had served to thin their ranks greatly. Jack at once gave the order to retreat.

"We'll fall back to our lines," he said. "Then, if we are attacked, we will be reinforced."

The order was quickly obeyed. The Boys in Blue fell back slowly for a quarter of a mile to commanding ground within the picket line of the right wing of the Union Army.

The dead and wounded were taken along. Also the captured guns were hauled along.

Here the Boys in Blue were quickly reinforced by a New York regiment, and the Confederates did not venture an attack.

The day's skirmish was over.

The Confederates drew their skirmishers off the field and the Boys in Blue, to the beat of the drum, marched back to their camp, hauling the captured fieldpieces.

The news of their prowess had spread like wildfire, and as they marched through the encampment they were cheered wildly.

Jack and Hal went to report to General Tyler, and the commanding officer expressed his delight in round terms.

"You are winning glory," he cried. "You have achieved

a great feat. I regret that you have lost any of your comrades, but there are hundreds of recruits coming in every hour, and you may fill up the quota at once."

This was done within the hour.

It was true that recruits were constantly arriving. Jack had no trouble in securing a sufficient number to fill up the company roll.

Only youths were accepted, none over nineteen years of age. It was Jack's and Hal's purpose to keep Company F, Fairdale Blues, a youthful company.

The Boys in Blue had distinguished themselves as scouts and as skirmishers. On the morrow they were to be given a chance to win laurels on the field of battle.

That evening all preparations were made for a general advance upon the enemy the next day.

It was intended to drive them from their trenches on the slopes of Bull Run and win a victory so decisive that the question of the Confederacy would be decided then and there.

"We shall whip the enemy to-morrow," said General McDowell, confidently, "and then we shall have peace."

Later in the evening the mail arrived, and nearly all the soldiers received letters from home.

Many a Union or Confederate veteran reading these lines will know what this meant.

Many a heart throbbed with joy, many a page was eagerly scanned with moistened eyes, at news from loved ones at home.

Hal got letters from his parents, and one in a feminine handwriting, which he kissed and placed in the bosom of his soldier jacket. It was signed with the name of his sweetheart—Bessie Clark.

Jack received letters from his mother and father. Homer Clark wrote:

"I trust that God will bring you safely through, Jack, and I know that you will not swerve in your duty. I only wish I was young enough to bear a musket, too. Your sister Bessie insists upon going to the front as a nurse. She will start to-morrow for Washington, so you may see her later, if she is in a hospital near you."

"Did you know that, Hal?" cried Jack. "Bessie is coming to the front as a nurse."

"Yes," replied Hal. "She has written me that she will be on the field to-morrow. Do you know, Jack, I have a queer presentiment."

"What?"

"I don't know why, but I have a feeling that we are going to get whipped!"

"Whipped?"

"Yes; I think the Confederates will beat us to-morrow."

At this Jack laughed.

"Don't you believe it," he cried. "The Stars and Stripes will triumph."

But Hal shook his head dubiously. What the morrow brought forth is a matter of history.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE OF BULL RUN.

The famous battle of Bull Run, noted as one of the most desperately fought in history, took place on Sunday, the twenty-first day of July, in the year 1861.

The soldiers of both armies were mainly raw recruits, and the majority of them had little military training and had never been under fire.

Despite this, they fought like veterans, under the broiling July sun, died like heroes, and won laurels of undying fame.

The advantage of position might have rested somewhat with the Confederates. They were upon the west side of the deep chasm, and had securely entrenched themselves, with Manassas Junction as their base.

The plan of attack contemplated by General McDowell was excellent, and might have resulted most successfully but for the fact that spies had already informed the Confederate General, Beauregard, of its details.

The original plan had been to send part of the Union Army forward, in divisions of five thousand men in each, to make a feint against the right wing of the Confederates.

Meanwhile, Generals Hunter and Heintzelman, with twelve thousand men, would advance to the Stone Bridge, turn secretly to the right and ascend the stream two miles, under cover of woods and ravines, to descend and strike the enemy in the flank and rear from Sudley Ford.

It was a well-conceived plan, but like many another went wrong.

The wily Beauregard, learning this plan, hastened to concentrate his whole available force, other than a few light columns left to defend the attack below, at Blackburn's Ford, ready to hurl themselves upon the troops of Hunter and Heintzelman, vastly inferior in number.

Burnside's brigade had just crossed the ford and was deploying upon the plateau beyond, when they met with a vigorous fire from infantry and artillery.

From that moment the battle was on.

While Burnside was thus sorely pressed, Tyler, at the Stone Bridge below, was driving the Confederate line back. Above, where Hunter and Heintzelman had crossed, the real battle was being fought.

With this brief description of the battlefield and position of the armies, let us hasten to follow the fortunes of the Boys in Blue.

They were a part of Tyler's division and had entered the battle at the Stone Bridge.

Here, under the cover of batteries, they advanced until the junction was effected with Heintzelman's division.

Jack and Hal were always in front of their company. The Colonel of the regiment of which they were a part gave them great praise.

Steadily the Confederates had been driven back. The little hillocks and scrub-covered knolls had everywhere been entrenched by the Confederates.

Their batteries, masked and unseen, would open upon the Union troops from unsuspected quarters.

Then the order would be given to charge. With wild cheers the regiments would hurl themselves forward to a mad conflict.

Sometimes they were hurled back. Grape and canister swept through their ranks pitilessly.

At times nothing human could hope to stand against anything so deadly. The dead fell in heaps.

Again and again the Boys in Blue, as part of their regiment of ten companies, scaled the heights and assailed the Confederate breastworks. One after another was captured and the foe driven back.

It looked like victory for the Union Army. The Confederates had been hurled back over a space of two miles.

Yet, always as the gray line melted another took its place. Reinforcements were continuously hurried forward from Manassas.

The Boys in Blue were nearly exhausted from the double-quick charges they had made. The heat was intolerable, and at times they sank flat upon the ground, completely exhausted.

But at no time did they fail to answer the call for a rally.

Jack was wounded slightly in the left shoulder. Hal had a cut across his temple. Half of the boys had slight wounds, but not more than half a dozen had fallen as yet.

There came a lull in the conflict in that part of the field where they were. The regiment threw themselves down in the shade of the scrub growth to get rest.

The scene was one to baffle description. The uproar was awful.

The ground trembled with the roar of artillery and the tramp of the armies. Shot and shell hissed and roared.

Colonel Stewart was lying down near Hal and Jack. The boy captain crept up to the Colonel's side and said:

"I think we are winning the fight, Colonel Stewart."

"Of course we are, Captain Clark," replied the Union Colonel. "We have driven the foe at every turn."

"Is there any danger of their getting reinforcements?"

"Only from General Johnston, who is miles away from here. But by the time he gets word our General, Patterson, with thirty thousand men, will keep him busy."

"I hope so," cried Jack. "I hope we may win a decisive battle and stop the war."

Colonel Stewart looked at Jack curiously.

"That will not end the war, my boy," he said. "The South is in arms, and they are powerful and determined. It will take many battles to beat them."

Just then a fresh roar of battle came to their ears and all started up. The Colonel began to creep up to the summit of a little hillock and Jack and Hal followed him.

From this elevation they had a good view of part of the battlefield. It was at the moment when both armies had spent their strength and a lull came while they faced each other like two gamecocks trying to get wind for a fresh assault.

The scene beheld by Jack and Hal was a thrilling one.

Great clouds of smoke hung overhead. The batteries were still playing in a deadly duel. Exhausted regiments were slowly moving into new positions.

Minie balls passed overhead with spiteful tone. Dead and wounded covered the field. Hospital wagons and white-clad nurses, angels of mercy, were to be seen in the rear.

Both Jack and Hal wondered if Bessie was there with the rest.

"Well, boys," said Colonel Stewart. "Our men are pretty well fagged. It has been a long, hard day. If we only had about ten thousand fresh troops to throw into the field we would end the battle quickly."

"Are there no reserves?" asked Jack.

"They are at Centerville. It would not do to bring them up yet. Hello! What the deuce is that?"

The Colonel's exclamation was warranted. Suddenly, over the roar of the guns, a sound arose which traveled across the ridges with thrilling force.

It was the cry which every Union soldier has cause to remember—the terrible Confederate yell.

This peculiar battle-cry, given forth from the throats of the Southern soldiers, was calculated to make an impression upon the hearers.

From ridge to ridge, from battery to battery, it went.

Thoughtless of danger now, Colonel Stewart sprung up. Hal and Jack did the same.

"There is something up," cried the Colonel. "That yell has a note of triumph in it. Ah! My soul! Do you see that?"

The scene which the boy officers beheld they never forgot.

It thrilled them with surprise, and the nearest approach to fear they had yet felt.

Of a sudden from the slopes, the forest and the hillside black columns of men were seen to debouch. They looked black in the afternoon shadows.

But as they came down in a great flowing stream of

humanity into the sunlight the glitter of their bayonets and the gray uniforms showed that they were Confederates.

Fresh troops they were, coming at the double-quick. Column after column, many thousands they numbered; flowing down upon the battlefield.

Flowing down to sweep back the exhausted Union Army, to turn the tide of battle and wrest victory from apparent defeat.

"My soul!" gasped Colonel Stewart. "The day is lost! The Union is beaten! Those are Johnston's men, come at the right moment. Now if Patterson were here!"

But he was not. Aghast and stunned, Hal and Jack gazed upon the scene.

Just then an adjutant came galloping madly by them.

"Fall back in order!" he cried. "We are overwhelmed. Reform your men on the other side of the Run."

He had hardly uttered the word when a bullet pierced his bosom and he reeled and fell from his horse.

The whole Union Army could be seen to melt away before the charge of the oncoming reinforcements. Bullets whistled all around Jack and Hal.

Colonel Stewart waved his sword and cried:

"Retreat it is, boys! Let us go back to our men. Let it be——"

The brave Colonel's exclamation was never finished.

A shell struck the ground but a few paces distant. It burst with a terrific roar.

All Jack and Hal could ever remember of the affair was an awful din, a column of flying dirt enveloping them and they were hurled deep into the thicket.

When Jack came to his eyes and throat were so full of dust that he could not see or speak for some moments.

The roar of battle was in the distance now. He finally managed to clear his eyes and looked about him.

Hal, who had just recovered also, sat a few paces distant looking at him. They were under a leafy screen of some scrub oaks, where the concussion of the shell had hurled them.

"Gee-whizz! Are you all right, Jack?"

"I guess so; only my head cracks. Are you all right?"

"I feel kind of sore. It was a shell, wasn't it?"

"Yes. Where is Colonel Stewart?"

The two young officers scrambled to their feet. An astounding surprise was accorded them.

Far below in the Run they saw their regiment in full retreat. A Confederate regiment was pressing down the Run to try and cut them off.

Between them and their regiment were hundreds of pur-

suing Confederates. To try to rejoin their comrades now was impossible.

"Whew! We're cut off, Jack!" cried Hal. "Let us get under cover, quick. If we are seen——"

But Jack gave a horrified cry.

CHAPTER X.

THE AFFAIR IN THE HUT.

"Look! Isn't that awful, Hal?"

Both young officers stood aghast and horror-stricken. Just below them lay the mangled body of brave Colonel Stewart.

It was one of the horrors of war.

Just yet they were not accustomed to it. They felt sick and faint.

But a Minie ball whistling by Jack's ear brought back to him a sense of self-preservation.

"My goodness, this won't do, Hal! If we are seen—quick, this way!"

They darted into the oak scrub.

They were now fugitives.

It was useless to try to regain their fleeing regiment. They could only endeavor to save themselves from capture or death.

They crept on in the scrub for some ways. Confederate soldiers were all about them.

Squads hurried past them on the double-quick, and only the leafy screen prevented their being discovered.

By degrees they worked their way down to the sandstone chasm of the Run.

Here, nestled against the cliff, was a small hut. Shivering on the steps was a negro.

The Union boys knew that they had got to find a hiding place somewhere. In a few moments every foot of the ground about them would be trod by Confederates.

Jack glanced at the cowering negro and gave a great start.

"Cato!" he cried. "Is it you?"

"Fo' de Lor! It am Massa Lincoln's two soger boys dat cum down to Prentiss Hall," cried the darky. "I so done glad to see youse gemmens. Yo' won't go fo' to see dis po' ole brack man killed?"

"Killed? Well, I guess not, Cato," cried Jack. "See here, my good man. You like Marse Lincoln, don't you?"

"Yah, ebery brack man laikes him, sah!"

"Then I want to tell you that we are his soldiers. The Confederates are all around us. We've got to hide somewhere until dark. Now, can you find us a safe place?"

The old negro shot a penetrating glance at Jack.

"Yo' is a mighty laikely young Union soger!" he said. "I jes' know dat Missy Nell, if she was here, would tell dis chile to look out fo' yo'. Yah, I'se gwine to hide yo' whar no libbin' man kin fin' yo', chillens. Jes' yo' foller Cato."

The colored man threw open the door of the hut and motioned Jack and Hal to enter.

The interior had for furniture only a rude table and stools. In one corner was a bunk and beyond this a clumsily constructed fireplace.

Overhead was a ceiling. It did not look as if there could be room between this and the roof for Jack and Hal to ensconce themselves.

But there was, and when the trapdoor was closed down they were in semi-gloom.

There were cracks in the wall of the cabin under the eaves through which they could see what was going on outside. Also cracks in the ceiling allowed them to peer down into the room below.

The plan of the Boys in Blue was to remain here until it was dark enough to enable them to steal across the Run and back to their own lines.

From the distance the roar of the awful retreat could be heard.

This has been told in history, with graphic effect. The magnificent army which had marched forth that day with such pomp and eclat was a demoralized, fleeing band of stragglers.

The roads to Washington were choked with a mass of humanity, whose sole impulse seemed to be to reach a place of safety.

Jack and Hal in their hiding place saw nothing of this.

They knew that the day was lost, that the battle was over and the army in retreat, their own company with the rest.

The old negro, Cato, disappeared after showing them their hiding place.

For a long time the two young officers remained where they were. Every moment detachments of the Confederates went hurrying past.

To have attempted to venture out now would have meant certain capture.

But after a time the troops had all passed and a new scene was presented.

Down the ravine came the hospital attendants, picking up the wounded.

Two of these came suddenly along toward the cabin, with a stretcher between them on which lay the form of a wounded Confederate.

Beside the stretcher walked a young nurse. She wore the uniform of the Southern Hospital Corps, and her face was averted so that neither Hal nor Jack could see it.

"Hello!" whispered Hal, "that can't be Bessie, for she would wear the other kind of a uniform."

"It is not Bessie."

"I say, she is coming here. Ah, listen!"

"Here is a negro cabin which will afford shelter for many wounded," said the nurse, in a musical voice which sounded familiar to both boys. "Bring the poor fellow in here. Then, just as soon as you can, send a surgeon here."

"All right, miss."

Just then the young nurse turned her face into view.

Jack gave a gasp and clutched at the ceiling beam. Hal gave a soft whistle.

"I'll be hanged!"

"It is Miss Nell Prentiss."

It was, indeed, the beautiful daughter of Colonel Prentiss. She looked a trifle pale, but to Jack more lovely than ever.

The boy captain half rose as if to crawl down out of the loft.

But Hal clutched his arm.

"Hold on there, Jack!"

"Let go of me!"

"What are you going to do? You can't go down there! It would give us away for a certainty!"

Jack saw that this was true. Reluctantly he resumed his position.

"She wouldn't betray us!"

"Don't be too sure. In any event, other Confederates will be along here soon. What did I tell you?"

Along the path toward the hut they now saw a young Confederate officer quickly advancing.

He was a tall, well-built fellow, with regular features, which might have been handsome but for the scowl which rested ever on his brow.

He halted at sight of the stretcher and lifted his cap to Nell Prentiss.

"Ah, Miss Prentiss," he said, in a voice which had an oily note in it, "this is a surprise and an unexpected

pleasure. But is it not ill-advised of you to adopt such a calling as this?"

Instinctively, Jack disliked this fellow. He was, therefore, not displeased when he heard Nell's reply:

"From my point of view, it is not ill-advised. It is a duty which I could not afford to shirk."

The young Confederate officer bit his lip, but walked nearer.

"If you undertake to care for all these poor chaps wounded here to-day, you will have an endless task."

"I shall not undertake such a thing, Mr. Wadley. But if I can give cheer and aid to even one, I shall feel that I have at least accomplished something for my country's welfare, as well as the cause of humanity."

She turned her back and directed the men with the stretcher, who now carried it into the hut.

The young officer whom she had called Wadley, scowled and his face grew dark. He walked a few yards away and pretended to be watching some troops crossing the Run.

"I say, Jack," whispered Hal, "she gave him a settler that time, didn't she?"

"That's right!" agreed Jack, readily.

"I wouldn't be in his shoes. Say, I don't like his face. It's evident he annoys her with his attentions."

Jack clenched his hands. He said nothing, but his eyes flashed.

The wounded man on the stretcher was now placed on blankets on the floor and the two attendants went away to find another victim.

A surgeon was approaching now and Nell called him into the hut.

"Here is a poor fellow, shot through the side, doctor," she said. "What can be done for him?"

The surgeon made a quick examination, while the poor soldier groaned in agony.

"The bullet can't be located just now," decided the surgeon. "The best way is to wait until he gets a little stronger and can stand having it probed for."

"But he is in awful pain."

"I will give him relief."

The surgeon dressed the wound and administered an opiate. Then he hurried away.

Nell sat down by the wounded man's side and bathed his fevered brow. In a few moments his moans ceased, and, as the opiate took effect, he lapsed into slumber.

With tender hands the young nurse arranged the wounded man's pillow. Then she turned and gave a start.

Wadley, the young Confederate lieutenant, had stepped

into the hut. There was an impassioned light in his eyes.

Nell straightened, and a flush came into her cheeks.

"How does it happen that you are not pursuing the enemy, Cliff Wadley?"

"The enemy is beyond pursuit," replied Wadley. "Your patient seems to have yielded to your tender services and has become much easier."

"The surgeon gave him an opiate."

"Lucky dog!"

"What! To get the opiate?"

"No; to be the object of so much solicitude on your part. I would gladly suffer a wound if I could be assured of you as a nurse."

He took a step nearer. His manner was ardent.

Nell drew back stiffly, and said:

"I don't care to have you make those kind of remarks to me, Cliff Wadley."

"Why do you treat me this way, Nell? We were school-mates. I am of as good family as you. I can give you a happy home, and be a true husband, yet you cast me aside with scorn. Won't you——"

"Stop!"

Her eyes flashed fire. Her proud Southern temper was aroused. But Wadley was also possessed of a like temperament. He did not retreat.

A mad light leaped into his dark eyes and with a swift impulse he stepped forward and threw his arm about her waist and strained her to him.

"You shall! You shall!" he gritted. "I will have you if I sell my soul——"

He never finished the sentence. What followed was startling in the extreme.

Jack threw up the trap and dropped through the ceiling to the floor below.

So sudden and unexpected was his entrance upon the scene that Wadley half relaxed his hold upon Nell and started back.

The next instant powerful arms hurled him across the room.

CHAPTER XI.

A PRISONER OF WAR.

Captain Jack Clark, quivering with indignation and contempt, stood between Wadley and Nell.

The young girl, breathing heavily, had regained her color and showed plainly her intense surprise, as well as relief.

"You hound!" cried Jack. "How dare you insult the lady?"

"Who—who in the fiend's name are you?" gasped Wadley.

"Captain Clark!" exclaimed Nell.

Jack turned as if on a pivot and made a sweeping bow.

"At your service, Miss Prentiss. No doubt my appearance is a surprise to you. But I trust I have done you a service."

"You have!" cried Nell, with flashing eyes. "I thank you for it."

"What!" hissed Wadley, drawing his sword and starting forward. "A Union officer here? You know him, you female traitor! I'll have you both made prisoners for this!"

In an instant Jack's sword leaped from its sheath. He held the point toward Wadley.

"Stand back!" he said, coldly. "No threat of yours avails here!"

Wadley halted, but did not sheathe his sword. He glared a moment at Jack and then at Nell.

"I see!" he gritted. "You know each other. You were to meet here by a clever plan. You are in the Confederate lines at this moment. I call upon you to surrender. If not, I will call a guard and have you overpowered."

"No, you will not!" cried Nell, with sudden fierceness. "This gentleman was my brother's college chum. He has rendered me a service and in return I am going to see that he escapes. Captain Clark, I ask you to go while there is yet time."

Jack bowed low.

"I will obey your command, if you think it is safe for me to leave you here in this fellow's company."

"He will not dare offer me insult again. The guard will soon be here. My soul! If you are captured—I cannot tell what may happen!"

There was a wild note of alarm in her voice. Instinctively Jack turned to leave the hut.

But with sword-point toward him, Wadley barred the way.

"Not this time," said the Confederate lieutenant, sneeringly. "My fine Yankee captain, you are my prisoner!"

"Am I?" said Jack, coolly. "That remains to be seen. Stand away from that door!"

"Not at present. I advise you not to try conclusions with me. I studied the art of swordsmanship with the best masters of Paris and Berlin."

Nell's face grew deadly pale. She would have protested, but Jack gave her a look that held her speechless.

The truth was, the boy captain had faith in his own ability to handle a sword.

The French linguist at the Fairdale College had once been a noted Parisian master-at-arms.

From him Jack had learned much about fencing.

He was by no means sure that he was Wadley's equal, but he had a powerful wrist and a quick eye.

So he simply held his sword at guard and said:

"I request you not to bar my passage, lieutenant. I know that your Confederate guard will happen along here soon, and it will not be safe for me here. Stand aside!"

Wadley's eyes were flaming with jealous rage. He shook his sword and thrust the blade forward.

"I'll teach you a lesson, you Yankee lout!" he cried. "Stand on your guard!"

The swords crossed in mid-air. Wadley tried to turn Jack's point and get in a thrust. He was astonished to find that he could not do so.

"Aha!" he snapped. "You know something about fencing, do you? Here is a trick you don't know!"

He feinted and then tried to go over Jack's guard. The boy captain, however, was not to be deceived.

He simply turned the thrust aside with nonchalant ease and whipping his own point in, drew blood from Wadley's forearm.

This maddened the Confederate lieutenant, and he flew at Jack.

The sword blades worked so fast that they were a flashing blaze of steel, but Jack held his own.

So intent were the swordsmen that they did not heed the sound of footsteps outside.

Into the hut sprung a dozen soldiers in Confederate gray. The tall, handsome young officer at their head rushed in and beat up the swords of the combatants.

"What's all this?" he cried. "Wadley—merciful powers! Jack Clark—and here!"

It was Will Prentiss, the young lieutenant of the Virginia Grays. He stared at Jack with pallid face, and then at Nell.

Jack stood a moment, with quiet dignity, then he bowed and held out his sword.

"I surrender to you, Will Prentiss. It is a pleasure."

"It pains me to be compelled to do this," said young Prentiss, earnestly. "I must accept your surrender, but—"

I know your army has been defeated and is in full retreat—but what are you doing here?”

“It can be easily explained,” replied Jack. “I got cut off from my regiment and sought a hiding place here. While in hiding I witnessed the attempt of this fellow to insult your sister——”

“My sister!” cried Will, clutching his sword hilt. “Is that true, Nell?”

“It is, Will,” replied the young Southern nurse. “But Captain Clark has already avenged me. Let that matter go, but, my brother, you must accord Captain Clark his full liberty. He betrayed himself to save me, and that is as little return as we can make him.”

Will Prentiss’ brow clouded. He fingered his sword hilt.

“I am sorry, my dear sister,” he said. “Your method is the true, practical one, but it is not in the line of military duty. I have no right to accord a Union prisoner his freedom. Only General Beauregard can do that.”

Nell Prentiss wrung her hands.

“But you can’t—you must not keep him a prisoner. He must be set free.”

“I am powerless,” said Lieutenant Prentiss. “He must be taken to headquarters.”

“The lieutenant is right,” said Jack, very calmly. “I am a prisoner of war. He has no other recourse.”

“Friendship and personal motives I must set aside,” said Prentiss. “This is a time of war, and I am pledged to do my duty by the Confederacy.”

All this while no sound had come from Hal in the loft.

The young Union lieutenant believed that it was better policy not to disclose his presence there. As he listened eagerly to all, a hundred startling plans flashed through his mind.

The impulse had been upon him to drop down and go to his friend’s assistance.

But he realized that this would be a foolish move.

He would only be made a prisoner, as well as Jack. It was better by far for him to keep his freedom and then do all in his power to rescue his brother officer.

So Hal remained silent where he was.

It did not seem to occur to any of the Confederates to look into the loft for more Union soldiers. They seemed to assume that Jack had been the only one in hiding there.

So Hal remained undisturbed.

Two of the Confederate soldiers took their places by Jack’s side now. He was a prisoner of war.

“I regret that I am compelled to do this,” said Will

Prentiss, with deep feeling, “but I would expect you to do the same by me if I were captured in your lines, Jack!”

“You do right, Will,” replied Jack. “I can ask no more. I assume that I shall be accorded the treatment of a prisoner of war and held subject to possible exchange.”

“You shall,” said Will Prentiss. “After all, you may soon again have your freedom. Your value as an officer is well known to the Union authorities.”

Nell drew a deep breath of relief.

“I shall pray for your safe return,” she said. And then she blushed at her own great eagerness.

Jack turned his head and their eyes met. The impulse seemed upon him to go to her side.

But a guard stood on either side of him. He remembered his position and said, with a bow:

“I thank you, Miss Prentiss. Your kind interest gives me pleasure.”

Wadley all this while had stood, sneeringly, in the background.

“What distinguished consideration to show a Yankee dog of a prisoner,” he said, with sarcasm.

Like a flash Will Prentiss turned and faced Wadley, with gleaming eyes.

“I have to settle with you, sir,” he cried, flashing out his sword. “Retract the insult you gave my sister, or I’ll attack you, on my honor as a Southern gentleman!”

Wadley’s face grew livid. Nell rushed between them. She knew that her hot-headed brother would pick a quarrel with Wadley, and that he was no match for the villain in sword play.

She also knew the vengeful nature of Wadley, and feared for her brother’s safety. So she cried:

“No! no! It was nothing. It is past now, Will. Let it all go.”

“Not until he retracts the insult!” cried Will, hotly.

Wadley’s lip curled.

“We will have no quarrel,” he said, “at least not in the presence of this lady, for whom I have such a high regard. Out of consideration for her, I will say that I may have spoken hastily.”

Will looked the villain full in the eyes. Then he sheathed his sword.

“Never darken the doors of our home, Wadley,” he said, sternly. “All friendship of the past is buried.”

“As you will,” said the Confederate lieutenant, with a curt bow. “This is not the end,” and he glanced viciously at Jack, and turning, left the hut.

Will Prentiss held out his hand to Jack.

“I thank you for defending my sister, old friend,” he said. “I will see that while you are in captivity you shall

receive proper consideration. We will meet again soon. Sergeant Wood, you will escort the prisoner to the rear and see that he is handed over to the provost guard, and direct that quarters be given him with other officers of the Union Army captured this day."

The sergeant saluted.

"Now, Nell," said Will, turning to his sister, "an ambulance is just coming. Your wounded soldier here shall be placed in it and conveyed to the rear. You may accompany him in the ambulance, if you choose. That is where all the nurses are in demand at present."

"Very well, brother," replied Nell. "I am anxious to remain with the poor fellow until the ball is extracted from his wound."

Just then the ambulance dashed up and took the wounded man and the fair nurse away.

Will Prentiss and his men now left the hut. Jack, with the sergeant and one private, was escorted to the rear of the Confederate lines. Daylight was giving way rapidly to darkness. The great battle of Bull Run was over.

It would be many months before another contest of such magnitude would occur between the two armies.

CHAPTER XII.

A VILLAIN'S GAME.

Captain Jack Clark was, for the first time in his life, a prisoner of war.

His sensations at that moment are hard to describe.

He had no fear of ill-treatment. Was this not a war between God-fearing people in a civilized country, and in modern times?

He reckoned only upon the time, however, and not upon any individual foe. How thoroughly he was to be disabused of this belief we shall see.

The scene in the rear of the Confederate lines was one to baffle description.

The line of the flying Union Army on its way to Washington was marked with the wildest confusion and disorder. But it was no more thoroughly disorganized a scene than that to be witnessed back of the Confederate lines.

The Confederates could claim the victory, it was true.

Military strategists of those and recent times have criticised the failure of the Confederates to follow up the rout of their foes and at one stroke dash into the Union capital and thus end the war.

But it must be remembered that both armies were made up of green and raw recruits, most of whom had never faced gunfire before.

The disorganization of the Union troops was scarcely worse than that of the victors. Exhausted by a long march, the reinforcements had reached the field in time to turn the tide of battle, but they were physically unable to follow up the victory.

This was what saved Washington from capture that day.

So that the exhausted Confederates were content to behold the flight of their foe, and, resting upon their arms, try to restore exhausted nature and bring order out of the wildest chaos and confusion.

Whole regiments of Confederate soldiers had cast themselves upon the ground, utterly unable to stand longer. The fierce July sun of that awful Sunday's contest, and the terrible exertion of repelling the constant Union charges, had literally worn them out.

Not a corporal's guard could be rallied to chase the Union Army to Washington.

To be sure, detachments were hurried forward to fire parting shots at the flying foe.

But no general pursuit was possible.

So, as Jack was led away across the battlefield, he beheld scenes of the wildest disorder.

Darkness was rapidly falling.

The sky, which had been so hot and brazen all day, was massing with black clouds, portending a storm.

The sergeant who had Jack in charge had not taken the trouble to manacle his prisoner or bind him in any way.

But Jack had not thought of such a thing as escape.

He believed that his capture meant simply courteous detention of perhaps a few weeks until an exchange could be made.

But just as they got beyond the smoking battlefield, and had begun to approach the encampment of the Confederate Army, a sharp voice sounded in their rear:

"Halt!"

Instinctively the sergeant and his men came to a stop and stood at salute. Four Confederate soldiers and an officer came up.

"Whom have you there, sergeant?" asked the harsh voice. Then Jack saw, with a start, that the speaker was Wadley.

Even in that instant the Union boy captain saw that this was all premeditated, and guessed the purpose of Wadley.

It gave him a momentary chill.

The sergeant saw that he had been halted by an officer

of superior rank. Whether he recognized him or not did not appear plain.

But he saluted and said:

"A Yankee prisoner, sir. I have orders to take him to the rear."

"Oh, you have, eh? Well, I'll relieve you of him."

"No!" cried Jack. "Obey the orders given you, Sergeant, by Lieutenant Prentiss."

The sergeant looked confused. At this Wadley laughed gratingly.

"The sergeant will hardly disobey a superior officer. You hear what I say, Woods? Leave the prisoner in my hands!"

The sergeant saluted and stepped aside. Jack saw that the game was up.

He was in a desperate predicament.

What Wadley's purpose was he could only guess. But he knew that it meant him no good turn.

The sergeant and the private strode away. Wadley spoke to his men:

"Seize the Yankee dog and bind him!"

In an instant Jack's arms were drawn back and bound behind him. Then Wadley leaned forward and hissed:

"I am going to settle accounts with you, my friend. I'll show you that your game is up."

Jack was marched away across the battlefield in another direction. He saw that the Confederate soldiers with Wadley were men of a rough type, and doubtless chosen tools, ready to do any bidding of his.

He knew that he was at the mercy of Wadley.

One of the men carried a rope, and Jack surmised that their purpose was to take him into the woods and hang him.

His appearance, bound and in the midst of the Confederate guard, excited no attention of note, for such incidents were of the most common sort.

He knew that it would be idle to appeal to any of the soldiers they met.

Wadley was an officer, and the assumption would be natural that he had captured a spy and intended to hang him.

Jack was a youth of nerve. He was too proud to show fear. Yet he did not like the thought of such an ignominious death.

How he was to avoid it, though, was beyond his ken.

If his arms had not been tied he might have tried to break away and make his escape.

But he was helpless.

A thousand startled thoughts ran through his mind. He tried to think of some way out of his dilemma.

But in vain!

Meanwhile he was marched across a part of the battlefield and along a high ridge through the oak scrub. Here a path led through a wooded glade.

The vicinity was apparently deserted. A sycamore, with widespreading branches, was nearby, and under this they halted.

At a gesture from Wadley one of the Confederates threw a rope over the limb. A noose was knotted in it.

Jack was led forward and stood under the limb.

Then Wadley motioned to his men to fall back. He advanced, with folded arms, and stood before Jack.

"Captain Clark, I believe, of the Fairdale Blues, U. S. A.," he said, mockingly.

"That is my name," replied Jack.

"The fortunes of war are against you, Captain."

"But my honor is unscathed, Lieutenant."

"Bah! What do you know about honor?"

"Enough to refrain from taking unfair advantage of a captured foe."

"Do you think I am taking unfair advantage of you?"

"Yes."

"What would you consider fair play?"

"A fair meeting, on even terms."

"Humph! Do you think I am such a fool as to accord you such a privilege? I suppose you would like me to cut your bonds and give you a sword with which to fight me?"

"I ask no better terms."

"You are modest, inasmuch as to fight a duel with such a cur as you would soil my dignity."

"It is safe for you to fling insult in my face just now."

"See here, Captain Clark; I am not a fool. I have seen you exchange looks with her, and I know that you would turn her against me, and——"

"Pardon me," said Jack, coldly, "to whom do you refer?"

"You know well enough. To the most beautiful girl in Virginia. To Miss Nell Prentiss."

"I would never dare assume that she would think of rewarding me with her favor," said Jack, quietly, "but at that, I think my chances would be better than yours."

"Oh, you do?" hissed Wadley. "Well, I want to tell you that I intend to win her, if not by fair means by any other in my power. I don't mean that you shall be an obstacle in my way. So I shall hang you up here on the limb of this tree for the buzzards to feed upon. Put the noose around his neck!"

One of the Confederate soldiers stepped forward to do this.

But he never carried out his purpose.

There was a flash in the darkness, a sharp report and he reeled back, clutching his breast.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUT OF THE TRAP.

We left Hal Martin in the loft of the negro hut, a witness to the exciting incidents in the room below.

Hal had been sorely tempted to drop down and give Jack assistance at first.

But sober second thought convinced him that this would be a most fatal move.

He knew that he would only become a prisoner also.

He could do far more to aid his compatriot by remaining where he was and keeping his freedom.

So he kept exceedingly quiet.

It was a matter of relief to him that neither Wadley nor any of the others had thought of searching the loft to see if there were more Union soldiers hiding there.

And not until they had all taken their departure did Hal really feel safe.

But he did not linger long after they had gone.

A daring purpose had entered his mind. This was to endeavor to rescue Jack.

"I'll never go back to Washington without my pard," he muttered. "What would the Fairdale Blues do without a captain? Not much!"

Hal dropped lightly down out of the loft and peered out of the hut.

He saw the ambulance rattling out of sight up the gorge.

Will Prentiss and his guard had gone in the other direction. The sergeant and private who had Jack in hand had gone up over the hill toward the rear of the Confederate lines.

It did not take Hal long to decide what to do.

He left the hut and dodged into the scrub growth in the rear.

He crept along through this for a ways until he had reached the summit. He saw Jack and his captors receding in the gloom of the departing day.

Hal looked about him and gave a start.

But a few feet away in the undergrowth lay the body of a dead Confederate soldier.

There was a wound in his forehead where the deadly bullet had entered and extinguished the spark of life. Hal was at once seized with an idea.

He hastened to carry it out.

The dead man's uniform was unstained with blood. It was but a few moments' work to strip it from him.

Hal pulled off his suit of blue. In a few moments he was dressed in the suit of gray.

He also removed the dead man's cartridge belt and his pistol. In the bushes near he found his fatigue cap.

Any man dressed in Confederate gray could have felt perfectly safe to cross the battlefield in that semi-gloom.

Hal knew that he would not even be questioned.

All this had taken but a few moments, so rapidly had he worked, so that when he left the thicket boldly he had not gone many yards when he saw Jack and his captors.

They had just been halted by Wadley and his guard.

Hal was astute, and as he watched the scene from a distance he instantly guessed what it all meant.

So, gripping his pistol in the fold of his sleeve he carelessly made his way around the field, keeping boldly in view.

When the party entered the dell, Hal was, therefore, but a few steps behind. He heard every word of the conversation between Jack and Wadley.

Now, Hal had no idea of seeing his young captain hung.

He would give his own life in the attempt to save him.

A dozen ideas came into his mind.

At first he thought of appearing in his uniform and attempting the bluff of forbidding the execution, as a superior officer.

But his uniform being that of a private forbade that.

He was finally impelled to adopt the only course left, and as the Confederate soldier stepped up to do the bidding of Wadley he shot him.

What followed was exciting enough.

Jack knew that a rescue was at hand. He guessed that it was Hal's work, and as the Confederate soldier reeled and fell he made a leap and dashed into the oak growth.

His arms were bound, but he had the use of his feet and he could run. As luck had it, he sprung right into the thicket which held Hal.

"Here, Jack!" cried the young Union lieutenant. "Come with me!"

Hal fired again and struck another Confederate soldier. Wadley, like the coward that he was, had dodged behind the tree.

"Treachery!" he yelled. "Don't let him escape! After him, you dogs!"

But Hal and Jack were deep in the undergrowth, now making their way with all speed away from the spot.

By the time Wadley and his men had recovered sufficiently to pursue them, they were beyond capture.

The two Boys in Blue ran on for miles. By keeping to

the woods they managed to cross the Run some miles above where the Confederate outposts were established.

This gave them assurance of freedom, barring the possibility of running into the arms of some Confederate body of raiders.

Not until they were sure that Bull Run and the battlefield was miles behind them did they stop.

Then, exhausted, they flung themselves down under a sycamore tree. They were tired enough to at once yield to slumber.

But they knew this would not do.

"Oh, my, Jack!" gasped Hal. "Hasn't this been an awful day!"

"Well, I should say!"

"What is going to be the outcome of it all? Only think! We have been whipped by the Confederates!"

"Oh, well," said Jack, "it is our first battle."

"Yes, but we will never put out a better army than this one was."

"Pshaw! Before the war is over you will see battles compared with which this will look like a skirmish."

"I suppose so."

"Our only way is to rally round the flag and meet the foe again."

"I say, Jack!"

"Well?"

"That Wadley is pretty badly gone on Miss Prentiss, isn't he? You did give him an awful good stand-off with your sword there in the hut."

"He is a rascal."

"Well, I believe you. I'd fight for that Miss Prentiss, myself. That's all right. Maybe I'll see my girl when we get back to Washington."

"Maybe you will."

"Well, I suppose we might as well push on."

"Yes."

So the two tired soldier boys arose and struggled on. They soon became satisfied that they were within the Union lines, though they had encountered no picket.

It was in the early hours that they joined the rabble of the defeated army outside Alexandria.

It did not take the boys long to discover that their regiment had reached Alexandria in good order and had done valiant duty in covering the retreat.

They found the Boys in Blue encamped just outside the town. When Jack and Hal burst in upon them there was an uproar.

To say their comrades were delighted would be stating it mildly.

Many a battle-scarred veteran of that fight who is alive

to-day can bear witness to the sensations of joy which scattered companies met afterward to find many of their comrades still in the land of the living.

Soldiering begets a tie of brotherhood which is only understood by those who have actually seen service.

Comrades in the ranks stand very near together and death comes as a distinct shock which for long thrills the heart with grief.

It would take many volumes to record these little heart-stirring incidents of a great battlefield.

Jack and Hal were embraced by the members of their company until they were exhausted with the effusiveness of the greeting.

Then their story was listened to with thrilled interest.

It made heroes of them, and when Hal's brave rescue of Jack was detailed, a cheer was sent up which was deafening.

But the boys also had a glorious account to give.

They told of the skill and bravery which Corporal Peters and Sergeant Ward, as captain and lieutenant pro tem., had displayed in covering the retreat from Bull Run to Fairfax Court House.

Nine more of the brave young soldiers had laid down their lives. It would be necessary to recruit the ranks again.

"Boys in Blue," cried Jack, addressing them, "it is with the greatest of joy that we greet you once again. We have deep cause to be thankful that we have come out of this great battle in as good condition as we have.

"We are happy in the knowledge that every man has distinguished himself, and all have done their duty. None could do better than that.

"We have lost the day. The enemy has driven us back, but we have not lost the glory of a brave struggle. Honor is ours, and the next time we go to the front we shall hope to retrieve this defeat.

"To the brave corporal and sergeant who filled our places so well, all praise is due. May those of us who are fated to live to see the end of this war be made better and surer men thereby. Those of us who may be called upon to give our lives for our country can wish for no greater glory than to fill a soldier's grave, with the dear old flag as a winding sheet. Three cheers for the Boys in Blue."

They were given with a will.

The next day the work of reorganizing the defeated Army of the Potomac was begun.

The people of the North recovered quickly from the shock of that first reverse in arms. Fresh companies of

volunteers rushed to the front and speedily there begun that organization on the banks of the Potomac of one of the greatest armies which the world ever saw.

At the same time the people of the Confederacy, encouraged by their victory, placed that master of strategy, Lee, at the head of their army, and their choice could not have been wiser.

The great war was on, with a full and terrible meaning. Rivers of blood were to flow, the best blood of the country was to be spilled ere the great question was to be settled.

Men of to-day look with regret upon the sad struggle, but if they had been in the places of the men of that day, either North or South, they would have been ruled by the same convictions. They would have been influenced by the sentiments of the community in which they were a part. However a question touches our interest, so we will defend it.

The Boys in Blue, with other companies, marched into the great encampment on the Potomac.

There, for nine long months, they, with others, went through the reorganization process, of which that famous General, George B. McClellan, was the leading spirit.

In the South preparations for war were pushed ahead on a scale of tremendous grandeur.

There was bitter criticism of the delay in the trenches on the Potomac.

"All quiet on the Potomac" became a by-word, and an unpopular sentiment. But perhaps it was necessary. However it was, the next time the Army of the Potomac went forth to battle it achieved the greatest results in history.

The Fairdale Blues were thus for a long time inactive, so far as actual service went.

Jack and Hal, however, were ever at the President's call and did much clever work beyond the lines as scouts and spies.

They encountered many thrilling experiences, which we will narrate in a future story.

Jack saw nothing of the Prentisses. He assumed, however, that Will and his father were still in the Confederate service, and that Nell was yet serving her apprenticeship as a devoted nurse.

Bessie did reach the front in time to perform many humane deeds after the battle of Bull Run.

She met Jack and Hal frequently in Washington, much to the delight of the latter.

One day a great and joyful surprise was accorded the young captain of the Blues, when Mr. and Mrs. Homer Clark walked into the encampment.

Jack was glad to see his father and mother. He had written them many stories of the great battle.

But he was now enabled to tell them more, and also to show them the brilliant company in drill. Homer Clark's eyes sparkled and he drew his aged figure up with pride and enthusiasm.

"We are proud of you boys," he said. "Fairdale is proud of its boy company. Oh, there will be a great celebration when you return after your period of enlistment is out."

"That will not be until after the war, father," said Jack.

"What!"

"That is true. Every man in this company has pledged himself to re-enlist and remain in service until the war is over."

Homer Clark pressed his son's hand, with deep feeling.

"God be with you," he said.

Events seemed to move slowly in Washington those days. But in reality the day was rapidly drawing near when the world was to be staggered with reports of deeds of daring and heroism greater than were ever recorded in history.

One day the order came for the army to move out of its entrenchments.

With the rattle of drums and the shriek of the fife, column after column marched away into Virginia to renew the war.

And with them marched our boy soldiers. When next we see them it will be in events far more thrilling than we have just recorded.

The Battle of Bull Run had been but a preliminary affair. The great war was on at last!

How the Boys in Blue achieved fresh laurels and won greater fame, we will endeavor to depict in a future story. Until then we will crave the reader's kind indulgence and write

THE END.

Read "AT THE FRONT; OR, THE BOYS IN GRAY IN BATTLE," which will be the next number (2) of the "Blue and Gray Weekly."

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